転生王女は今日も旗（フラグ）を叩き折る

2

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イラスト：雪子 Yukiko

Arian Rose アリアンローズ

あのクソ親父!!

馬鹿はそっちでしょうが!!!!

1500万回読まれた物語！

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lang="en">

Ch 1-46 Tensei Oujo

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Translated by Kirileaves

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Cast

OBVIOUSLY, there will be *SPOILERS* (no matter how small),
so *DON'T* look at this until you've caught up to recent chapters.
Please highlight the profiles to read them.

Author's note: ※Will be updated when necessary.
Characters are introduced in order of appearance in the story.

【 Rosemarie von Wervard 】
The Main Character (MC).
The First Princess of Nebel Kingdom.
Additional notes: Father (King) is Randolf.

(Game setup: Heroine's Love Rival, 16 years old.)

【 Christof von Wervard 】
Rosemarie's older brother.
The First Prince of Nebel Kingdom.

(Game setup: Support character, critically affects story in the Johan Route, 19 years old.)【 Johan von Wervard 】
Rosemarie's younger brother.
The Second Prince of Nebel Kingdom.

(Game setup: Love Interest/Siscon, 15 years old.)

【 Georg zu Eigel 】
Only son of a Margrave.*
Rosemarie's fiancé candidate.
Additional notes: Father is Moritz, Mother is Emma.

(Game setup: Love Interest/Narcissist, 18 years old.)

【 Julius zu Eigel 】
Younger brother of Head of House Eigel.

Georg’s uncle.

(Game setup: Support character, critically affects story in the Georg Route, 33 years old.)【 Leonhard von Olsen 】
Later becomes Commander of the Royal Knights.
Johan and Christof’s sword instructor.

(Game setup: Support character, critically affects story in the Klaus Route, 31 years old.)【 Klaus von Belmar 】
A member of the Royal Knights.
Rosemarie’s guard knight.

(Game setup: Love Interest/Masochist, 28 years old.)

【 Lutz Eilenberg 】
Palace Wizard apprentice.
A genius of water-attribute magic.

(Game setup: Love Interest/Necrophiliac, 19 years old.)

【 Theo Eilenberg 】
Palace Wizard apprentice.
A user of fire-attribute magic.

(Game setup: Support character, critically affects story in the Lutz Route, 19 years old.)【 Michael von Diebold 】
Second son of a Viscount.
Apprentice priest of the Great Temple.

(Game setup: Love Interest/Dark Lord, 20 years old.)

Prologue

Prologue

WWWHHHYYYYYY?!

I screamed internally and hid myself under the covers.
I was in shock over what I had just witnessed. In the palace courtyard, you could see a man and woman getting closer to each other beneath the majestic trees.

The woman had just been summoned* to our world from another universe—the legendary Priestess.
Her hair was a soft chiffon beige color, with a medium-length bob cut. She had big, double-lidded eyes, a delicate nose, and glossy pink lips. In sharp contrast to her baby looks, she had a huge chest. The type of beauty men fell over themselves to protect.
To put it bluntly, I liked her looks.

I'll be her friend, she's so cute it makes me want to take care of her, and…now is not the time for thoughts like that!

As for the man, he was suited up in body armor—a Royal Knight.
He had spiky black hair, and eyes with a perceptive glint in it. His stubble added an edge of ruggedness to his good looks. He stood taller than most women by a head, and had a well-honed body.

My GOD, my sight was almost destroyed by the perfection of his body agai—… now is not the time for drooling!

There was the Prince, the Noble, the Guard Knight, the Wizard, the Priest, and the Assassin.
There were so many options to choose from, it was literally overflowing! She who could have *anyone* in this reverse harem, why was she embracing the *one guy* I liked?!

WHERE IN THE WORLD DID I GO WRONG? Someone tell me, please…!

The Reincarnated Princess Thinks to Herself.

The Reincarnated Princess Thinks to Herself.

I, Rosemarie von Wervard, was born as the First Princess of the Nebel Kingdom. I've lived once before, and I've retained the memories from that previous existence.

In other words, I was reincarnated with memories of another life. Yup.

I don't think it's necessary to dredge up the little details from that time, so I'll just say that I got into a traffic accident and blacked out. When I came to, I had become a baby.

Hey, what is this, a light novel?

I grew up healthy, and quickly turned three. When I finally learned what the names of my kingdom, of my father, and of my own were, I tilted my head in doubt.
Feeling like I'd heard them all before, I mulled over it until it all came back to me. The entire setup of this world was from an otome game!

Seriously, is this a light novel?

It was the same kingdom, set in the same world. The guys, the original appeal of the game, had the same names and the same faces. And then there was me, the one who had the same name as the Heroine's love rival.
There were way too many similarities for me to pass it off as a mere coincidence.

"This sucks," I unintentionally muttered, and let out a big sigh.

When I thought about it, I was really glad that my maids couldn't see me. A three-year-old staring into space looking depressed might have been too alarming.

Even though I knew this world resembled the one from the game, I wasn't excited at all. In fact, I *couldn't* get excited.
The reason was simple—it was a shitty game.

If I wasn't wrong, the title of the game was "Welcome to the Reverse World". (UraSeka)

In the story, a high school student was summoned to another world to serve as its priestess, and it became her duty to defeat the Dark Lord and bring peace to the world.

The main story itself was the same old recycled plot, so there wasn't much to comment on.

The problems were the characters.
The title of the game didn't just refer to another universe—it also implied that all of the love interests had a hidden side beneath the surface.
That much I could deal with. I didn't even have a problem with the world being a carbon copy of the game's.

No, the issue was that the selling point of the game was a total letdown.

The Second Prince was a siscon. The Noble was a narcissist. The Guard Knight was d'M. The Wizard was a necrophiliac. The Assassin was gay. As for the Priest, even though he was supposed to be the natural enemy of the Dark Lord and was the one who summoned the priestess, he was a yandere with a handful of destruction wishes.

This was the perfect example of when the developers tried too hard to stand out. The instincts of a *normal* person who discovered *this* sort of reality was to immediately run away, pretending not to see what they just saw because they didn't want to get involved.

The first love interest I went after was the Noble, but when I began to get an inkling of his true personality, I quickly lost enthusiasm. The Heroine was *truly* an angel for taking the time to listen to the dilemmas of that idiot. Either *that,* or she had mad skills to become a caretaker.

Fueled by a burning desire to sell back the game as soon as possible, I managed to get to his ending. The moment he saw the Heroine in her wedding dress at the wedding ceremony, the Narcissist only had one thing to say, *"How beautiful…I am, reflected in your eyes."* I threw my controller at the floor.
HEY! Scenario writer. Are you stupid?
When we think it's finally good and dead, you just had to make the illustration

scene fade to black with those gawdawful words? That's *horror*. If you were trying to create a romance game, you've just made a farce of the entire product with that single line.

Since all of the guys were like this from beginning to conclusion, it just wasn't possible to find excitement anywhere. The gushing emotions you were expecting turned out not to be moe—it was the desire to kill. In the end, I felt like I had just taken a newly developed stress test.
It wasn't just me, either. It seemed like everyone else felt the same way.
And yet, there was a reason why none of us could throw the game away.

Beyond the sparkling good looks that were the only appeal of the love interests, something called support characters brought joy to that world.

Unfortunately, the Heroine couldn't get closer to them because they weren't the original targets. Depending on the route, some of those characters' names wouldn't even appear.
For some unfathomable reason, though, they made a full set of *normal* love interests.

The most important part of all was that they had great personalities. I swear, it's true.

The First Prince was intelligent and levelheaded. The narcissist Noble's uncle was kind and gentle.
The Commander of the Royal Knights was a caring, handsome guy. The Cadaver Freak's wizard rival was an enthusiastically hard-working person.
The shop assistant from the restaurant Assassin began working at after he changed his profession was a feminist who was nice to all women, and the Priest's older sister was a beautiful woman prone to taking care of others.

How the hell did this happen?!

I'd like about an hour to interrogate the development team. Why did the specs for creating the support characters seem better than the love interests' own on every level?!

The reason why I continued to push my way through the game was because of them. Maybe, just maybe, if I cleared the main guys, I could open up the routes for the support characters. That was the ray of hope I held on to.

But, it was hopeless. Their routes didn't unlock. Or rather, there were never any locks in the first place.
Even with the image of despair steadily crushing my soul in mind, I persevered. There had to be at least *one* secret character!

From what I gathered on the net, I could safely say that just like me, the unlock everyone most hoped for belonged to my beloved Commander. Just for the chance to see his smile, I'd persevere through any agony!
I persevered…but I was betrayed, by God, and the development team.

When the number in the corner of the screen indicated that I had collected 100% of the scenes, I wept.
Gathering all of the memories and yet getting no unlocks, what remained was the realization of how much time I'd spent, and the game I'd wasted it on.
The sea of emptiness was vast. What the hell have you been doing, myself?

For the record, out of all the possible endings in the game, the most supported one was the Normal End.
Without getting close to any of the characters, the Heroine was unable to protect the peace of the world. Filled with despair, she quietly returned to her own world. If you're wondering why an ending with a bad element in it is so popular, well…it was because *he* showed up in it. The Commander of the Royal Knights.
While the Heroine grieved over her lack of powers, he gently caressed her head and said, *"It's not your fault. Find happiness over there."*

Don't make me fall for you even more!
Do you know how many times I've yelled at the Heroine, *"Don't go back!"* as she went home with that never-changing apologetic look on her face?

Oops, I got off-topic. So, if we assume I was reborn in the world of that shitty game, it was inevitable that trouble will keep showing up.
If I wanted to live in peace, there were a lot of flags I needed to strike down.

Out of the six guys who were more trouble than they were worth, all I needed to do was aim for one and avoid his flags and what not. It was gonna be a headache-inducing situation, but…what choice did I have?

"……."

Another big sigh escaped from the three-year-old me as I made up my mind.

I can do it!

For the chance to meet my beloved Commander! For the future!

The Reincarnated Princess's Brothers.

The Reincarnated Princess's Brothers.

"Brother, I have a request to make."

When I first called out to him, First Prince Christof opened his ice blue eyes wide.
It was rare seeing anything on my older brother's usually expressionless face, so I took a good look at his readily apparent surprise. He closed the thick book in his hand, returned it to the bookshelf, and then crossed the space between us to stop in front of me.

"How rare for you to come to me."

Even though his words came off sarcastic, I could tell from his expression that he didn't mean anything by it. In reality, me approaching him *was* out of the ordinary.
However, if you asked me to explain why that was the case, all I can say is it was an inevitability. It was not as if I had been avoiding him because I hate him.

In relation to Chris, my little brother Johan and I only shared half of his blood. Christof was the son of the late queen, who died as soon as she gave birth to him. Johan and I were the children of the second queen.

As current queen, my mother harbored deep prejudice against my older brother because he was a living memory of the woman my father still loved.
It naturally followed that she never allowed us close to him.

I think I should just do what I please, but I had to wonder if that was really how a child would act.
My mother has also never been affectionate towards my little brother and I. If it wasn't in front of Father, I'd be amazed she if ever spoke to either of us.

"Won't you get scolded by my lady?"

"It doesn't matter."

“But…”

“I’m already five years old. If we’re talking about taking responsibility for my actions, I am capable of that.”

Dumbfounded, he called me by my pet name.

“Rosé…”

He really was a great guy. Even though I was the daughter of the woman who treated him with such contempt, he was showing concern for my well-being.
If only someone would take a scrap of this guy, steep it in hot water, and force the Second Prince to drink it.

“Understood.”

Chris stared at me silently and for just a short span of time, his expression softened.
I can’t say that we’re close, but he was looking at me kindly, the way a grandfather would to his grandchild who’s all grown up. That’s impressive dignity for an eight year old, my royal brother.*

“What was it that you wanted to ask of me?”

He returned the main topic, not digging any deeper.

“Actually, it concerns Johan.”

“Johan? What happened to Johan?”

It’s not what happened to him.

“I wish for Johan to have the strictest, wisest tutors assigned to him,” I stated.

Chris became lost for words.

In UraSeka (Reverse World), the Second Prince of Nebel Kingdom, Johan von Wervard, was a love interest and also a major siscon.
The only person he loved was his older sister, Rosemarie. The only one he trusted from the bottom of his heart was Rosemarie. If she said jump, he asked “How high?” Even if a crow was black, if she called it white, he immediately declared it to be white. That was the type of loyal follower he portrayed.

The entire cause was wrapped up in his broken family background.

His father, the King, devoted all of his time to matters of state without ever sparing an ounce for his family. His mother was only interested in gaining her husband's love.
And yet, so that Christof could never get close to her son, Johan was raised inside an enclosed and narrow world.

The maids acted as if they were touching something foul, and kept their distance. So that they didn't risk upsetting him, all of his tutors went easy on him.
In the midst of all that, the only one who looked straight at him was Rosemarie.

It was inevitable Johan would become dependent on his older sister.
Or, so it seemed when it was someone else's problem. When that burden fell on my own shoulders, I finally realized the truth—there *must* be a limit to everything.

Right now my little brother was four years old, and cuteness overload! Wherever I went, he followed close behind. He resembled a baby chick, chasing after me with his toddling footsteps. There was *no way* he wasn't cute.

But. He's been a little strange lately.

If I leave his side, he starts to cry immediately. He also disliked it when anyone came close to me, but even when he got jealous, he was still cute!
However, he went too far when he attacked the maid whose only crime was catching me when it seemed like I was about to fall.
I mean, she was a maid. A girl. Even after I told him she was only helping me, it was terrifying how he didn't hesitate to go after her. When she saw him grab the paper knife from on top of the desk, she started screaming her head off.
We only managed to get out of the situation without incident when I stood protectively in front her with my hands spread out.

No violence! No more YANDERE!

Something needed to be done with the strangeness that had recently come over my little brother, I decided.

"I have no right to request a favor of you, brother. However, even if I were to beg father, I do not think that he would accede to my wish for change."

“……”

The King has no expectations for his youngest son.
When he says he doesn’t have time for the Second Prince because he already had an heir beyond excellent, it wasn’t that I didn’t get it…I just wish he’d care a little more.

Johan has been spoiled rotten, and the tutors were negligent in their duty by not teaching him well enough. This applied to mother as well—I also wish she’d take more care in the choice of his tutors.

“What he needs is someone he can respect by his side. If I remain the only one who tells him when he’s done wrong, his world will only become more and more narrow.”

Honestly, it’d be a pain if his siscon symptoms got worse.
If Johan became a yandere on top of that, it’d be too much. My mental health wouldn’t be able to cope.

“If he finds it within himself to forgive you, in the future, he’ll…Johan will become a strong ally. Won’t you take it upon yourself to raise him with the utmost discipline?”

It had occurred to me that if Chris, as heir apparent, were to propose it to Father, there *might* just be a change.
Besides, when I thought it through, if my strict brother were the one to handle the approval process, I’m sure that the persons selected would make superb tutors. It was killing two birds with one stone. If luck happened to be on my side and my brothers got closer to each other—possibly resulting in Johan turning over a new leaf—that would also be one less worry on my mind.

“You are fine with this?”

“Of course,” I replied at once.

In Christof’s eyes, Johan and I must look co-dependent on each other. “If Johan moves out of his isolated world, can the sister who is left behind live by herself?” was what he thought.

Honestly, he needn’t have worried.
If Chris teaches Johan how to be independent, freeing me to move toward my

goal, I'd be forever indebted to him.

"Even if we are separated, the fact that I am his older sister will not change."

Dear little brother. Your sister will be watching over you from the grave…not! From a *distance,* so please grow up respectable.

"I see," he muttered, sighing.

My brother smiled, unusually gentle.
Having never seen him like that before, I immediately closed my eyes in self-preservation. I can't look! Against such a pure smile, my dead fish eyes were sure to get crushed.

Afterward, Chris proposed the idea to father, all of Johan's negligent tutors were dismissed, and Chris appointed tutors of superior caliber in their place. For Christof himself to personally get involved with Johan's education, he was already raising him with plenty discipline.

Dear little brother… I'm begging you, so please, *please* grow up respectable!

The Reincarnated Princess's Efforts.

*The Reincarnated Princess's Efforts.**

Well, then. Next up, I think I'll strike down the flags belonging to that featherbrain of a narcissist.

Georg zu Eigel**. Heir to his family's Margraviate, and also, Rosemarie's fiancé. Notice how smoothly I said that? I'll say it again. Rosemarie's fiancé, in other words, mine, in the future. Was that featherbrain.

AHAHAHAHAHAHA! I'm not kidding.

Even if he was *that* pitiful, I couldn't sacrifice my own life for his.

I did feel a little guilty about the part of me that wanted to make an offering of him to the Heroine. If I was planning to hand him over, the least I could do was make him a better person.

In that case, the first thing I need to focus on was his childhood.
Just about every one of the love interests in the game had a sad past, and Georg was no exception.

Georg had fine platinum blonde hair like silk threads and amethyst eyes. His mother was a frail-looking beauty who seemed like she might break if you touched her, and like the cliché "beautiful people die young", she passed away when Georg was around 8 years old.
The young child who lost his beautiful mother grieved and cried his heart out, and yet, there was no one to console that little boy.

His father, the head of the household, was also in despair over the loss of his beloved wife. Without a second thought for the son who had been left all alone, he drowned himself in ruin.
His younger brother—Georg's uncle—stayed by his side as his support, desperately trying to get what remained of the head back on his feet.

Left to his own devices, Georg continued to search for traces of his dead mother.

Not letting the servants approach, he shut himself inside his mother's room, and one day he found her inside the mirror.
Completely covered in his mother's shawl, the living image of the mother who had been compared to a white lily in life shaped herself before the him—it was Georg himself.

Mirrors, the water's reflection, glass—as long as he had something that reflected his image, he could meet his mother.
That's the story of how Georg became a narcissist.

Honestly, it was depressing. Seriously depressing.
That *that* weirdo had such a sad past was pretty amazing.

But. In the present, his mother only had a weak constitution.
The first time I met her I was five years old and Georg was around six. I think I was supposed to meet with Georg as a candidate for marriage to see if we suited, but I quickly neglected him and became attached to his mother.

Sitting up from bed, she smiled at me while her husband stood at her side observing her with a worried expression, and then he introduced her to me.

"Please forgive our rudeness, Your Highness. My wife has a delicate body and her physical condition deteriorates during the seasons' changes, so she cannot properly rise."

"I am honored to have this privilege. I am the wife of Moritz, Emma."

"I'm Rosemarie."

Grinning broadly, I greeted Lady Emma with fascination.
She did have a fragile beauty, but when she smiled she resembled a young girl. It was so not fair. Who was this person, she was way too cute!

Using the fiancé candidacy as my excuse, my young self who fell in love with Lady Emma at this point came back to visit her many times.
If I think about it, having the princess stop by so often must have been a pain in the neck, but Lady Emma always greeted me with a smile on her face. "Miss Marie," she affectionately called me, and treated me with love as if I were her own daughter.
Lady Emma was an angel. A goddess. Georg? What's that, is it tasty?

After visiting her a few times, I discovered the reasons for why her body was so weak.

Point One. She wouldn't eat.
On top of already eating very little, she had an unbalanced diet. Her favorite foods were fruits, and—like a child—she hated vegetables. I mean, the Lady Emma who hated carrots WAS cute but…proper nutrition is pivotal!

Point Two. She almost never moved around.
Basically, she passed the time by reading in bed or working on her embroidery all day.
In my opinion, because she never got any exercise, she couldn't stomach a lot of food. In a so-called downward spiral, she couldn't eat, so she lost her stamina.

Point Three. She never got sunlight.
She never stepped outside, so of course she wouldn't.
Humans need the sun. I don't remember very well, but it was supposed to be important for things like building stronger bones and stimulating the nervous system. Also, if you were always inside by yourself, you'd be bound to get depressed.
Overtanning wasn't healthy either, but getting sunlight in moderate amounts was necessary.

When it came down to sicknesses, I couldn't do anything about not being a doctor, but in Lady Emma's case I was *pretty sure* she wasn't suffering from a deadly disease. When the seasons change, there were a lot of things that prolonged her colds and made it easier for them to get worse. In that case, if we could get her body stamina up, we could probably avoid the tragedy set to happen in two years' time.

In order to do that, I decided I'd need to enlist Georg and Julius—his uncle—in the effort to improve Lady Emma's condition.

The Reincarnated Princess's Efforts. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Efforts. (2)

"Mother's…meals?"

Georg tilted his head in confusion. The splitting image of his mother, he was so cute he could be mistaken for a girl.

"That's right. I want to add vegetables."

"But…mother hates…"

Georg seemed to be struggling to get the words out. Ya. I know your mother hates veggies.

"That's what I'm saying. I'd like to create dishes so delicious even a veggie-hater can eat them. Do you have any suggestions, Master Julius?"

When I addressed him, Master Julius put his chin in his hand, lost in thought. He didn't have an androgynous appearance like Georg's, but that of an ideal adult man's. He had clear-cut features, small lips, and light brown hair that flowed down his back. Slightly sleepy green eyes softened the hardness of his masculine face.

"She doesn't eat much to begin with. I think soup would be the easiest, but… my sister-in-law dislikes even that much."

"What seasoning is used?"

"I think…just a little salt."

The question was directed at Master Julius—smiling ironically to himself—but it was Georg standing next to him who answered before he could even form a response.
Just a bit of salt, huh? A veggie-hater would definitely find fault with that.

It occurred to me to make consommé, but I didn't think it existed in this world. If we were to make it from scratch, it would take too long. I've tried making it once before in my past life—it required a lot of ingredients and painstaking

effort, and I could remember vowing to never *ever* make the same mistake again while clarifying the broth.
It doesn't seem like all of the same ingredients existed in this world, either.

"Oh…!"

I struck the palm of my hand with my fist. Standing next to me, Georg watched me with interest, but I ignored him and as I recalled a recipe.

How about a potage?
If it was that, even a veggie-hating child would be likely to eat it.
It wasn't consommé, but at least we could *make* it. It would've been easier to have a mixer, but if we strained the soup we should get the same result. Best of all, you could make a variety of them.
Like potato and pumpkin, or stock and carrot. After she acquired a taste for veggies, cold soups like a fresh tomato gazpacho might be a good choice too.

I wondered if olive oil or wine vinegar existed?
Or maybe soy milk? How limited are the seasonings in this world?

"Master Julius!" I called in a loud voice as I edged up to him.

"What is it?" he asked, eyes rounded.

"Can I leave it to you to gather seasonings from other lands?"

Master Julius ran a trading business*.
Even if you're born to a noble household, only the eldest son may succeed to a peerage. In order to test the strength of his abilities, Master Julius went down the path of trade and found that he had talent for it. Whether it was fermented foods from a small kingdom in the East, or textiles and threads—which are trade secrets only passed through guilds in the West—he focused on steadily increasing customer demand for goods that had not yet been noticed in our kingdom.
You'd call guys like him up-and-coming young entrepreneurs.

"Leave it to me. I am familiar with and deal in all sorts of salts and sugars, as well as many varieties of vinegars and oils. I have even begun to handle requests for a fermented product processed from fish."

What was he talking about, fish sauce?

Damn… I was getting excited. Was there soybean soy sauce too? Mustard? Curry powder?

"Would you like to see?"

I was full of unsuppressed emotions and itching to get moving, and Master Julius looked at me with an impish expression.
The ideal man's eyes were twinkling with laughter, like a child who just had a mischievous idea pop into his head. WTH! Was this family is trying to kill me with gap moe?

"With pleasure!"

After that, Master Julius and I convinced the Eicher family chef to try and recreate the recipe.
Lord Moritz was taken aback at my daily visits, but when he found out it was all for Lady Emma's sake, he willingly accepted me into his home. He was a *very* devoted husband.

While I wondered what I should do with myself, I gave Georg—who looked as if he would cry—a special duty to carry out.
Every day, as much as possible, even if it was only for a little bit at a time, he was responsible for getting Lady Emma out for a stroll.
If it was at her adorable son's request, she wouldn't have the heart to turn him down. No, she has always been a kind person, so even if it was me, she probably couldn't bear to disappoint.
Nonetheless, I thought it was important for mother and son to enjoy quality time with each other.

It could've been the weather or the climate, but that day, while paying particular attention to the condition of Lady Emma's body, the length of their walks gradually increased, little by little. Lord Moritz and his servants were soothed by the figures of the two as they leisurely strolled around, admiring the flowers or the birds.

"I'll add flowers and carvings until the garden is stuffed!" the husband thought. That was how much he loved his wife. This guy.

Then it came time for Lady Emma to taste the potage we had gone through trouble after trouble to make. Tears came to our eyes the moment she

involuntarily exclaimed: *“Delicious!”*
I linked hands in delight with the chef who had worked so hard with us, and the overjoyed Master Julius lifted me up and spun me round and round. We were all in high spirits.

Lady Emma’s food intake gradually increased, and her complexion began to look better as well. Lately, she has even taken to having tea with me and Master Julius in the gazebo located in the corner of the garden.

When the seasons change now, she almost never took to bed anymore.
There was one more year until Georg turned eight. She hasn’t had a relapse yet, but…I’m sure it’ll be fine? I couldn’t help smiling with happiness when I saw the color on her cheeks, or how she’s filled out a little.

However.
This beautiful woman who smiled like a young girl suddenly threw a bomb at me.

“Miss Marie, when will you finally marry Georg?”

“……HUH?”

“Wha—…MOTHER!”

Georg—who sat next to me—turned bright red, then pale as a ghost.

CRAP…! I completely forgot I was supposed to break his Engagement Flag! *I FORGOOTTT!!!!*

It seems like the future had already been settled in their minds when I kept on popping up at their family residence. I’ve been so stupid, I’m about to strangle my own neck.
I might have destroyed Lady Emma’s Death Flag, but it has become desperate for me instead.

“I often chat with Moritz, telling him how much I look forward to the day you become my lovely daughter. He also sees you as his own, and these days he has been cheerfully saying he’ll turn Georg into a worthy young man who can match you well.”

What should I do? I had zero plans of marrying her son, but she was looking at me with eyes so full of expectations it was hard for me to tell her no.

It wouldn't pain me so much if she was only hoping to establish a connection with the royal family or was doing it out of self-interest, but I could see nothing of the like in her smiling face.

Becoming Lady Emma's daughter did sound attractive, but…
I couldn't. I've already decided to dedicate everything I have to the Commander I still have yet to meet. Or perhaps I should say, in all honestly, this situation was so absurd my above-20-years-in-mentality self couldn't manage to see the present 7 year old Georg as anything resembling a romantic interest.

Just when I had begun to sweat under the pressure, a helping hand came from the most unexpected place.

"It's still too early, sister."

Silent until now, Master Julius put down his cup, a wry smile on his lips.

"Oh my, do you think so?"

"Yes. Her Highness might seem wise beyond her years, but she's still only six years old. There's still plenty of time. If you keep mentioning marriage, you'll only trouble her," he scolded.

Lady Emma became dispirited.

"I see… I'm so sorry, Miss Marie. I hadn't intended to make things difficult for you, but I suppose I was rushing too much."

"No, please! It makes me very happy for you to say you consider me your daughter."

In a panic, I decided to add more, but I had to hesitate a little before taking the plunge. If I dared to say it, now was the only chance I'd get.

"However…there *is* someone I long for."

"Hah?!"

"What?!"

The first ones to respond to my words were Georg, then Lady Emma, and finally, Master Julius. Georg stood up with a pale face, Lady Emma's eyes lit up, and Master Julius smiled, looking very interested.

“My! What sort of character is this person?”

I thought Lady Emma would be disappointed, but she actually took the bait with great enthusiasm. It seems like girls’ love stories are popular in every world!

Driving the guys away, Lady Emma persistently questioned me until I was at my wit’s end.
I still haven’t met the Commander of the Royal Knights, so I could only make a mess of my story. However, even though my responses were ambiguous, she seemed to understand.
Just as I was leaving, she smiled and said *“I’ll support you!”* so I’ve somehow or other managed to put that issue to rest…or so I’d like to think.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Shock.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Shock.

“Sisterrr!!!”*

“Aghh!”

One random day, afternoon. Since Lady Emma’s condition has vastly improved, I’ve been keeping my visits to the Eicher residence to the bare minimum, and have begun to throw myself into my studies with a passion.

I was heading for the library, and had just passed through the corridors facing the garden when a golden bullet slammed into my stomach.

“Sister, sister, sister!!!”

The true identity of that bullet was Johan. The mop of hair an even brighter shade than my own was grinding itself into my stomach.
Dear little brother. For heaven’s sake, please ease up. I’m afraid your sister’s internal organs are about to squeeze out through her mouth.

“Princess Rosemarie, are you hurt?”

“I’m fine.”

My guard knight stood behind me, at a loss. Oh, I guess he knew the golden bullet was the Second Prince, and that was why he couldn’t stop him.

While I was wondering what I should do with my dear, puppy-like little brother, another voice that wasn’t mine addressed him.

“Johan.”

“!”

Johan’s small body went ramrod straight in shock.
The one who appeared, carrying a wooden sword for training, was an intelligent and beautiful boy. It was my older brother, Christof.

“We were in the middle of training. Go back.”

The cold inflectionless way Chris said that was really intense. Though I knew intuitively he hadn't meant those words for me, my spine instinctively straightened itself out as well.
Of course, in his surprise, Johan clung to me even harder. Why do children have so much strength in their hands? Big sis is seriously about to have her intestines regurgitated.

Lowering those ice blue eyes of his, Chris sighed, and Johan's body jumped again. He was frightened by each and every one of Chris's actions. Exactly what type of training were they doing…?

"How are you, brother? My deepest apologies, it seems like I've interrupted your training."

I knew he wasn't in a good mood, but I tentatively greeted him anyway.
Chris shook his head *"no"*. He stayed emotionless the whole time, but the eyes he turned to me were kind.

"It's not your fault. For some time now, Johan has been very depressed at not being able to see you."

It seems like once he saw me, Johan abandoned his training and started running in my direction.
I was careless. I'll need to pay more attention to the paths and the times I take them.

"Johan."

I bent my knees, looking into the face of my little brother who stood just a bit shorter than me.

Big, slanted upward eyes becoming damp, Johan said: "Sister?"

It wasn't like the little brother who had become emotionally attached to me wasn't cute. Even if he also happened to be spoiled, a crybaby, and a deeply jealous pain in the butt.
However, if I let him have his way here, nothing would change.

"Johan, apologize to our brother."

"Huh…?"

My stern features reflected in his wide open green eyes.

Ohh, I'm so sorry, Johan.
But your big sis has decided to harden her heart against you. The time we've spent close together, just the two of us, has changed. I have my own world, and your have yours—we both need to make them bigger places for ourselves.
The useless sister who was only sweet to you is gone.

"Our brother is taking time out of his busy schedule to help you train. You insult his generosity."

Apologize. When I said it again, Johan's lovely face distorted in tears.
The hands seizing my clothes let go, and instead clutched tightly onto his own trousers. Holding back his tears, the tip of his nose turning red, my little brother hung his head and said in a small voice—

"I…I'm…sorr…"

"I can't hear you. Raise your head, look at your brother, and say it again!"

"Ugh…"

The expression on the guard knight standing close to the petrified Johan became inscrutable. Chris was also staring at us in amazement.
I probably sounded so evil. *Good.*
Because I've decided to shift gears, going from the sweet sister to the Devil herself.

"I…'m srry…"

"Once more!"

"I'M SORRY!" Johan shouted in a loud voice, his back straightening with a snap.

My fierce expression finally softened.
Well done. Good boy!

Nodding in satisfaction, I turned to face Chris—

"……?……!!!"**

—and promptly froze on the spot.

I’m not surprised because Chris had accepted the loud apology with a wry smile, no.

Behind him was someone who had obviously been standing there for a while. Wearing clothes that looked easy to move in, he also held a practice sword, one similar to the one Chris carried. He had probably been teaching Chris and Johan how to wield it. By the way, he was known as the strongest swordsman in the whole kingdom.

Spiky black hair, and dark eyes with a perceptive glint in them.
Everything was the same, from his fearless face to his jawline, and—with the stubble missing—he looked younger. No, he *was* young.
Looking up at him, I noticed a tight body with a good amount of muscles running up and down its length. This wildly handsome guy was observing me as if I were an amusing furry specimen.

“Bro…ther…”

“What’s wrong, Rosé?”

That’s not what you say after all this time.
Please, brother. Tell me it’s not true. That I just…became a different person. And made *him* misunderstand.

“Who…is that man?”

“Oh. He’s our sword instructor, and also a part of the Royal Knights.”

When Chris mentioned him, the man kneeled in front of me.
Taking my hand with reverence, he lifted it until his lips almost kissed the skin. His breath grazed my fingertips, and I stood transfixed in spite of myself.

“Please forgive this worthless servant his impudence for daring to approach you. I am a member of the Chivalric Order of the Royal Knights, Leonhard von Olsen, and undeserving of the great honor of your royal presence.”

The sweet, low voice I’d been dying to hear was speaking to me.
When I finally got the chance to meet him, I’d planned to bump into him a little and tremble cutely from embarrassment. He probably had the worst possible impression of me now.

(At the scene of the most important meeting in my life, you can find—…yes, I did it, I’m guilty!)

I’ve waited so long for this moment, and my first encounter with the future Commander of the Royal Knights was just shot by me.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Shock. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Shock. (2)

Crap… I seriously wanted to cry.

Until the day we met, I’d planned to improve myself.
I hadn’t started looking for him yet because I assumed he wouldn’t have already joined the rank of the knights when I was still a child.
I mean, imagine it. A little girl strongly coming on to an adult man? It wouldn’t be effective at all.

At the start of the game, Rosemarie was around 15~16 years old, and Sir Leonhard was already 31. Even then it would’ve been shady for him to date her, so now it’d be completely out of the question.
And I’d thought it would be nothing but heartaches when I met him, but…

It was over. Not only did the unexpected happen, the way he looked at me with that knowing look on face? My romance was dashed against the rocks before it could even sail.

“Your Highness? What troubles you?”

“Eh… Ahh… It’s nothing.”

I shook my head, desperately holding in my spilling over tears. I withdrew my hand from the palm of his big hand, and took a step back.

“Sister? Do you hurt somewhere?”

Johan watched me, worried for me despite the fact that I had treated him poorly not so long ago. I smiled to show I was OK, but it might not be convincing enough, so I summoned a real smile for him. He relaxed.

My little brother was so innocent and kind—it pricked my conscience painfully.

Sorry, Johan…
Your sister is wavering, even though she had just decided to strengthen her resolve so that she could raise you right.

All she can think of in front of the guy she likes is smoothing over her blunders. It's ugly and cowardly.

From now on, she'll truly become a demon who won't waver no matter who stands in her way!

Forcing the muscles to move, I plastered a smile on my face.

"I apologize for showing you something so unsightly. I am the First Princess, Rosemarie. I thank you kindly for watching over my brothers."

Sir Leonhard looked at me strangely. His unexpectedly long lashes blinked several times, and he spoke to himself, singling out a single word.

"Unsightly…?"

"Sir Olsen…?"

"Excuse me. Err, Your Highness, do you refer to your brave display from earlier?"

It was foolish of me, but when he said "brave", I held my breath.
My heart had broken and seemed like it would never recover. I had no idea what I stupid expression I was making *now,* but I hoped it wasn't something I'd get teased for later.

"……"

Taking my silence as an answer, a soft look came into Sir Leonhard's eyes. It was so unexpected I was struck by shyness, and he smiled faintly.

"My sincere apologies. To embarrass a lady is the deepest shame for a knight. However…I am aware of how impolite it will sound, but there is one thing I would add."

"……?"

"When I saw Your Highness earlier, I found myself thinking…you were magnificent."

"……!!!"

The moment his words penetrated through my brain, the beautiful sound of bells rung out, and the air became stifling hot in an instant. Obviously, I couldn't

see it, but I could tell that my face was boiling up. My ears were burning!

Oh, no, what do I do? What happened to my resolve?!
A scary sister is *not* supposed to be blushing! A demonic sister is *not* supposed to get carried away by romance, falling apart at the hint of a smile!

No matter what I yelled at myself, my body itself was honest.
Contrary to my wishes, the red tinge of my face seemed like it wasn't in a hurry to leave, I was starting to become giddy, and my muscles were turning into jelly. Lips trembling, all I could do was hang my head.

Sir Leonhard was pretty amazing.
In no time at all, he had me eating out of the palm of his hand so easily.

"Sister."

"Johan…!"

I had completely forgotten that he was standing next to me.
WHAP! I turned my head to him, and a chill ran down my back. He sent me a withering look, the cold light in his blue eyes pure contempt.

Oh, shit. I guess he thinks I was making fun of him. While I gave him hell, in front of another man, I acted like a completely different person, cute and bashful. I'm a horrible human being. Fickle. A tease!
I'm a *fool!!!*

"Why are you blushing, sister?"

I never thought I'd ever see my cute little brother like this. Questioned by such a scornful voice, my words stopped at the lump in my throat. I wanted to apologize and say, *"I'm sorry,"* but I was sure it wasn't enough for him to forgive me.

"Be-because…"

"Johan."

Unable to watch as I mumbled, hemming and hawing, Chris cut into our conversation.

"Stop condemning Rosé."

“But, brother!”

“I do understand how you feel, but you shouldn’t take your anger on her.”

Rebuked by Chris, Johan looked down, frustration written all over his face.

“All right.”

I-I’m sorry… I’m such a terrible person. Even though you don’t know what’s going on, I’m making you bear the brunt of everything. I’m really sorry.

“Throwing a tantrum and imprisoning her in a cage of guilt won’t do you any good, either. The current you should understand, right?”

Wait, *what?* What was Chris *saying?* How did it go from me messing up bad with my love craze to me needing to get locked up?
I couldn’t follow him at all, but Johan seemed to have no trouble. Suddenly looking very mature, he nodded his head in agreement.

“Yes.”

“Then let’s return to training. There is much to learn.”

Hey, hey, *hey.* Why do I feel like I’m being left out…?

“Sorry for the holdup. Let’s go, Leonhard.”

“Yes, sir.”

“See you later, Rosé. Sorry we troubled you.”

“Oh uh, not at all. Please work hard on your training…”

Christof and Johan turned on their heels, leaving me in the blank.
Chris left after saying goodbye, but Johan merely bowed. He must really despise me now. I was hoping to cure his siscon, but I never wanted to be hated like this. Is this what they called reaping what you sow?

For some reason, Johan came to a stop in front of Sir Leonhard, his big eyes seeming to challenge the other man as he stared up at him.

“……”

Several seconds passed in silence.
Eventually, Johan left without saying anything, and began walking back to the

training area. From behind, it looked as if Johan’s figure had gotten a bit taller.

I wonder if it was just my imagination?

The Reincarnated Princess's Evasions.

The Reincarnated Princess's Evasions.

Author's note: Nothing strong enough to warrant the story receiving an R-rating, but there are a few peculiar scenes here and there.
Please avoid if you're squeamish.

[Yes, she means it. You have been warned!]

After the chance meeting, a few days later.

I've been diligently attending to my studies, day in and out. Now that I've met my beloved Commander, it was time to throw all of my energy into self-improvement again. That whole flag destroying matter could wait. Until the other love interests start gathering at the palace, business has been closed for the foreseeable future.
I want to believe that I can live in peace for a few years until the Wizard and the Priest make their appearances.

Johan was getting trained by Chris, and it was easy to see how he was changing. He stood a little taller, and above all, he looked different now. The spoiled crybaby who clung to me until recently has become more princely.

As for Georg, sometimes I'd visit Lady Emma and it was great fun listening to her gossip about his progress. The boy who used to look exactly like his mother was starting to become more manly these days.
Georg's father and uncle were both taking a hand in training him for his future. Not only was he receiving a gentleman's education, he was also devoting himself to learning the fundamentals of trade from Master Julius.

Were House Eigel to fall into ruin, Georg would still be able to support his wife and children, or so Lady Emma boasted, laughing.

Ruin, she said. It really was not as impossible as she was lightheartedly making it out to be.

Anyway! Leaving aside the topic of Lady Emma's natural airhead self, if those two turned Georg into a decent man, the flags affecting Rosemarie can be struck down by two.
If the unknown Priestess chooses Johan or Georg, either I won't be put under house arrest for the rest of my life by one, or I won't end up in a loveless marriage with the other.

All right. So far, so good!

"……"

Once upon a time, I truly did believe that.

I'm currently cooped up in my room, reading a history book that had been assigned to me by the person teaching me history. There were a lot of archaic phrases, and I was struggling through while trying to hold a dictionary open in one hand, but…good grief, it was impossible to concentrate. I can't do it!

Someone has been staring at me with a gaze so strong, it seemed like a hole might burn into the fabric of my clothes.

"……"

No, I wasn't being too self-conscious. I could *feel* it—that dreadful stare—and if I look over my books, for a split second, our eyes will meet.

Could you get lost!!

I was so worked up there was a stabbing pain in my stomach. It felt like I had an ulcer.

The criminal guilty of aggravating me these past few days was my guard knight, Klaus von Belmar.*

To tell you the truth, there was one guy I could have left alone in this world—the masochist Guard Knight.

With love interests lurking around every corner, it might seem strange that there would be someone who didn't need to have his flags destroyed—but of course, there was a reason for that.

In the game, when it came to Klaus, he was "unable to act once he left Rosemarie's side," and destroying this flag—his inability to act alone—becomes

an important premise in his story.

In the current world, Klaus was 18 years old.
He had short-cropped dark brown hair, a deeply chiseled face—strong eyebrows over beautiful deep green down-turned eyes, and a youthful smile that was popular with the young ladies. His smile really suited him, it freshened up his athletic look. Too bad it was going to waste.

The story of how Klaus came to be entrusted with Rosemarie's protection happened a little before a year ago. It was too late to do anything for him by that point—he had already started showing masochistic tendencies.

Klaus is the second son to an earl. His free-spirited older brother, who had played without a care of his surroundings, proved taxing to their more reserved parents. This in turn influenced their choices in Klaus's upbringing, not necessarily for the better.

So that they wouldn't repeat the same mistake with their younger son, Klaus had an extreme upbringing—he became someone who could perform in everything flawlessly.
But, no matter how perfect he was, there were just some things he things he failed at. He was only human, after all. It was natural.
Unable to see things so optimistically, he blamed himself more than necessary. He tortured himself with criticisms…and before you knew it, his self-loathing had become a desire for self-punishment.
I didn't really understand what clicks in the mentality of a masochist, but in his case it was probably his perfectionism tearing him apart. I do wonder if it was his anguish that did him in at the end.

As the years went by, his older brother began to settle down. Once their parents realized this and started focusing on him, Klaus enrolled to join the kingdom's chivalric order and left home. Several years later, he became Rosemarie's guard knight.

In other words, no matter what I try, Klaus's masochism is something I can't destroy myself. Unfortunately, when I think of the Priestess who *could* do something about it, I'm reminded that her whereabouts are still unknown. There was also an age gap between the two. I guess it was impossible from the start, so

I had no choice but to give up for now.

There *was* another important reason why I need his flag to get destroyed, and that was because of…the twisted Master and Servant bond between Rosemarie and Klaus.

You see, Rosemarie von Wervard loved Klaus.
Not, not *me*. Until the very end, the in-game princess did.

It was almost inevitable that the young girl was drawn into a romantic relationship with the handsome guard knight. Klaus had always stood beside Rosemarie since her childhood. Nurturing the love-resembling longing in her heart, she did not confide her secret feelings to anyone.
Klaus himself had always thought of Rosemarie as a little sister. He cared for her deeply and it showed in the the way he protected her, but he held no romantic feelings for her. What finally broke the status quo was something that happened when Rose was 13 years old.
By chance, she witnessed a portion of his tryst with an older maid.

Rose was trying to hide under the covers when she overheard a heated dispute, repeating again and again. The argument seemed to be over a divorce or something of that nature. She was about to get out and call for Klaus when a *SMACK!* resounded throughout room. Shocked by the sound, she froze.

Peeping in the direction it came from, Rose found Klaus together with the maid. His cheek was red, and the maid held him in a tight grip. Ready to fly out and protect her knight, she froze once again at the contents of their conversation.

“You think you can live when I’m not here?! Is there anyone other than me who is capable of hurting you? Do you really believe you can be satisfied with a normal woman?!”

The words coming from the maid’s mouth left Rose in a daze.
She couldn’t understand what the maid was saying. There was no way a young child, must I point it out, would understand why someone would resort to violence.
However, far from refuting the maid’s claims, Klaus remained silent in her abuse. He was shivering as if he were intoxicated, and even the untouched side of his

cheek was flushed crimson. There was a thick look of enrapture in his eyes, and before long the word *“More…!”* fell from his lips in a heavy, panting voice.

I flipped out at the TV screen.**

“What the fuck are you bastards showing to the innocent princess!”

Teeth grinding together, if I could have jumped into the screen, I would’ve covered up Rose’s eyes and ears, and ushered her out of the room. After that was accomplished, I would’ve exterminated those two without a hint of hesitation.

In the present world, there was a possibility that things could still go this way, but since I was Rose now there would be no point for it to. Sadly, life did not intend to go the way I’d like.

And so, by herself with no one to cover her eyes or protect her ears, an endless stream of thoughts ran through Rose’s mind. The culmination of all her reasoning was—if she could bring herself to inflict pain on Klaus, she would be able to make him hers.

That’s amazing, princess. After a repulsive scene like that, to say nothing of you not hating it, going so far as matching his preferences is not something anyone can easily do.

I’m sure it must’ve taken a lot of courage for her to summon the nerve to hurt the person she had always loved. Despite her trembling, Rose struck him in the face, and Klaus fell to his knees in shock.
Looking down on him, she said, *“Klaus, you’re a filthy dog.”*

Let me say it again. The princess was amazing.
Hauteur like that couldn’t be taught. She was *born* a queen. He had his breath taken away by the strength of her presence, not adoration.

“Pr-Princess Rosemarie! I…I was—”

“Silence! I don’t recall permitting a dog to speak my name!”

Once more, she struck Klaus, who was creating desperate excuses, with the palm of her hand. At this point in time, I could see a new nature emerge from Rose.

“I’m your master, aren’t I, doggie?”

It was the moment the princess became a sadist.
This was how Rose and Klaus threw away their affectionate siblings’ relationship, and became bound by the twisted ties of a master and her servant.

I myself supported this new development. If anyone asked me why, I’d answer they matched each other well. Like they say, for every man, there was a woman. Or, *“every Jack has his Jill.”*
As long as they were both happy, I had no problems with it. However, Klaus always regretted warping the innocent princess he had protected for so long, and that regret left an opening for the Heroine to get into his heart.

When Klaus and the Priestess finally got together, the princess was so sad I couldn’t bear to look at her, but…now I encourage it!

C’mon! Make my day! Have at him, Priestess!!!

I had no intention of becoming a sadistic princess! While I’m at it, I’ll even swear for all eternity I had no intention of falling in love with him.

All the more reason for the two of us to keep our harmless relationship. Whatever fetishes Klaus may have, it didn’t change the fact that he was a talented and excellent guard knight. I’m saying I’ll try my best not to step into the dark side of his personality, so it would be nice if we could build a relationship with good boundaries.
Klaus had wanted to conceal the fact that he was a masochist, so for it to go any further, Rose would have to expose it first. Let’s stay like siblings forever, it would be better for the both of us!

Or, that was what I thought.

So why has he been making funny eyes at me?!
Until just a few days ago, he was still that refreshingly fine young man, wasn’t he? Maintaining the perfect distance—not too close, and not too far.

What in the world made him start throwing those smoldering looks my way?!

The Reincarnated Princess’s Evasions. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Evasions. (2)

“……”

Calm down. Be rational, Rosemarie.
You still haven’t confirmed if Klaus has an interest in you yet.

There must be a reason why he keeps looking at you. Maybe you have bed hair, there’s a piece of lint on you, or bread crumbs on your face.
What else can it be? Please, let it be that!

I made up my mind and decided to call him.

“Klaus.”

“M—, m’lady!”

For a second there was a hitch in his throat, all expression clearing off his face before he answered. You couldn’t tell at all from looking at him that he had a certain fetish.

I gulped in a breath of air, and gave it to him straight, “Is there something on my face?”

I didn’t want to prolong this deadlock any longer. The way things have been lately had my stomach hurting so bad, you’d have to excuse me from suffering.

So, Klaus. No need to hesitate. Just hurry up and tell me if there *is* something there. Bread crumbs? A piece of lint? Or perhaps, a sweet potato fry?

We stared at each other. With great reluctance on my part, but it would have been too unnatural for me to look away. I waited, trying to keep my face from twitching as much as possible.
After seconds, or a decade’s worth perhaps, had passed in heavy silence, aggravating my stomach ache even more, Klaus finally opened his mouth.

“No.”

Oh, I see! So there was nothing on my face!
Then I wanted you to answer immediately, you *son of a bitch!*

Mouth open on his nervous face, Klaus broke eye contact and looked down. I thought I spotted a faint tinge of color on his cheeks, but it must be my imagination. Today's weather was great, but I suppose it *was* a tad warm. That explained it!

"In that case, don't just watch me, observe your surroundings as well. You're not only a guard to watch over his charge!" I reprimanded.

Klaus gave me a salute. "Yes, m'lady!"

Wai—…why do you look so happy. Stop, don't look at me with sparkles in your eyes! You weren't actually receiving a reward!
Or rather, hey, self! Don't skirt around the topic!

Wearing a poker face, I shrieked in my mind. I mean, this guy just didn't get it. He was way too messed up! Why would he look so happy getting dressed down by a little girl who probably knew nothing about guards or fighting?
If reprimanding him and hitting him was ineffective, what else could I do? Should I try reverse psychology instead? Maybe petting him? Handing out the compliments??

I silently fell into confusion.
On the other side of the desk, I felt like I was confronted with a wild animal or some unknown life form, and I was blindly treading with my instincts. If I made one wrong move it would be the end for me. Hands folded tightly under the desk, the back of my neck broke out in a cold sweat for the first time.

In the end, what did I do?

"I'm going to the library."

I ran.
Laugh at me for deserting in the face of the enemy if you want.

Because I've had enough of this pain inducing atmosphere!
The maids were watching us attentively from a distance, and Klaus probably wasn't even aware of them. I would definitely prefer to study in peace!

Taking my assigned book and dictionary, I left my seat.
Phew, I sighed quietly, and didn't even notice for several seconds. That the danger I had been planning to evade was, in fact, not something I could evade at all.

"I will accompany you."

"……"

Oh yeah, that was how it went.
He was my guard knight, so obviously he'd go where I go, right! You're such an idiot, Rosemarie. AHAHAHAHA.

With sunken eyes, I walked through the corridors, and following me was a perv —…err, a guard knight.
"Ugh, he can be whatever he wants!" I sulked, but then I realized what I was seeing through the windows, and my feet stopped moving.

Below I could see the training area.
My energetic little brother was hard at work again, training with my older brother. Johan, who was still a head shorter than Chris, looked like a mythical dwarf next to the giant figure of Sir Leonhard. I kept worrying he would get crushed underfoot.

It *was* hard. I've always been next to him, and I still hadn't gotten used to this distance between us. Even if he fell down, I couldn't help him get up anymore, and that acute sensation of loss made me feel a little sad.
But no, *no,* this was what I wished for. I wasn't allowed to complain. Even if he hated me now, it was a consequence of my decision, so I needed to deal with it.

Forcing myself to look away, I was about to move again when I looked up and noticed the man in front of me.
I clashed eyes with Klaus, who had a eerily warm look in his.

I paused.

What was this disappointing guy looking at?
Couldn't her Royal Highness make a few funny faces?

"What."

Ya lookin' at me, punk?! I menaced him with cold glare, but Klaus didn't wipe that look or smile off his face.

"Princess Rosemarie you are…a very kind sister."

What's wrong with you?
Or rather, you were there with us the other day when I was scolding Johan. What the heck are you saying when you saw the way I treated him?

"Your flattery is unwarranted."

Giving him a suspicious glance, I started moving.
I knew I was treating him poorly, but I had no idea when I'd step on a landmine, so I didn't know how to tread around him.

But far from being discouraged, Klaus kept talking to me as he followed behind. He was seriously a nut.

"It is not flattery!"

"Is that so?"

"Princess Rosemarie, I have only been serving you for a year and eighteen days —"

How accurate…

"—and four and a half hours, but—"

Accurate! And *creepy!*

"—I know how the people around you weigh on your mind, how anxiously you worry about them, and what a truly beautiful heart you have."

Shaken up, I responded without intending to, "Y-you think too highly of me."

My turmoil was in no way brought about by embarrassment from his praise, nor accompanied by the giddy emotions of a young girl infatuated. It was fear. I was getting pulled in.

I'm begging you, please don't pull me to the dark side!

Nevertheless, the guard knight who couldn't seem to sense the mood denied my statement enthusiastically. "That is not so."

I was too scared to look over my shoulders, but he was probably smiling at me right now.

Please, sense the mood! I'm pale as a ghost and my voice is shaking. No matter how you look it, you can't possibly interpret it as embarrassment, so get a clue already!

"Your Highness, I know you believe that if you truly care about His Highness, it is your responsibility to be harsh to him when time calls for it, I truly do. It is a bitter pill to swallow, and I greatly sympathize with your plight."

"Klaus, that's enough."

"The other day, you were so awe-inspiring and beautiful…"

I told you to stop, didn't I? Listen! Listen to me!
I'm desperately sending you my thoughts!!!

"This is my sincerest belief. Your Highness, there is more to you than the young, cute princess."

Oh, *NO.* I was getting chills. I seriously had a bad feeling about this.
Coming to a halt, I turned around. Klaus was looking at me earnestly, eyes blazing with conviction, and I unconsciously held my breath.
My premonition reached its peak, and alarms went off in my head.

"Princess Rosemarie, it is my wish that you too will become my maste—"

I interrupted him.

"Klaus!"

Because I rarely ever raised my voice, Klaus stared at me in surprise, but that wasn't my concern. For the sake of destroying a frightening flag, I can throw off the persona I've diligently cultivated anytime.
I mean, this guy was starting to talk about *masters!*

In the scene where he changed the way he addressed her from *"Princess Rosemarie"* to *"Master",* Klaus vowed absolute devotion to her. Because it vividly recalls the dodgy relationship between the two, it became a taboo word to me.

"You shouldn't say something so thoughtless," I told him in a crushing voice. If

I relaxed, my voice would shake.

I want to escape. I really want to get away.

I don't know what's wrong with him anymore.
Why are flags raising on their own when I've done nothing to make it happen? Why does this keep happening to me? Unavoidable Events are way too hard. This isn't easy—it's seriously scary.

"Your master is my father. Not me."

"……"

Hey, don't look so dissatisfied.
I'm begging you, listen to me! Also, *don't* come any closer.

"By order of the King, you were forced to babysit his daughter."

"That is not—"

"I do not ask for any more from you. Therefore, you should also take that into consideration."

"Princess Rosemarie…!"

I was being obstinate, so Klaus got impatient and took a step forward.
Wait—…ho-hold up! Calm down…actually, just stay away!

"I understand that you sincerely wish to serve me. However, if the person receiving your words had held ill-will towards you, the meaning of your words would have changed, and they might have interpreted it as dishonest instead."

He made a sound of surprise.

"You have already sworn allegiance to the King, and therefore upon me as well. That is exactly why you should stop saying such thoughtless words."

"Princess Rosemarie…"

I stared at Klaus, wanting to make sure we were agreed.

He was silent.

Great. He seemed to be getting it.
My official stance was, *"Stop saying things with double meanings that can make*

people doubt you," but it was all a cover for, *"Don't call me your master."*

I may look composed, but my thought processes were dripping with cold sweat. Ahhh—…*hurry up!* Sorry if I never want to have another heart attack inducing exchange like this again.

I walked away, pretending not to see the questions lingering on his face.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Bewilderment.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Bewilderment.

The carriage shook me to and fro, but I was in Heaven. There were two reasons for this.

Reason one. I went out today to celebrate Georg’s 9th birthday.
My former fiancé candidate may have turned a year older, but that doesn’t mean I’m the type to celebrate each and every occasion.
This time, however, it was special.
Georg turning nine meant that Lady Emma’s Death Flag—she was supposed to die when he was still eight years old—has been completely destroyed.
Today, she was laughing robustly. We had tea, and she grumbled about how she’s gotten a little plumper, but with great cheer.
I’m so glad. Really, I’m happy for them.

“……”

The person inside the carriage with me smiled slightly.
When I looked at him, his eyes were crinkling gently as he looked back. Calmly, he lowered his eyes and bowed his head.

“My apologies.”

“It’s fine.”

I shook my head.
I wouldn’t take offense simply because he laughed. Or, how do I put it? When he laughed earlier, I knew he wasn’t laughing *at* me.
I’m simply filled with curiosity. What exactly did I do to make him laugh?

As if he had read my dissatisfaction, he continued his explanation. “Your Royal Highness, you were smiling so happily, I could not help myself.”

It was infectious, his impish eyes told me.

Unable to meet his unreasonably tender gaze, I looked down.

Even if I can't see for myself, my face must be bright red.
I can't help it, I like him. If the person I like the most smiles at me this nicely, of course I'd be tickled pink.
This guy—*Sir Leonhard*—holds my heart in the palm of his hands, after all.

"Will you forgive my insolence?"

"Of-of course."

For a moment, I stammered over my words, but I managed to smooth over my glitch.
I repeated orders inside my heart to stay calm, *calm!* as I breathed in short breaths.

"Rather, the one who should apologize is me. I'm truly sorry for interrupting your day with my selfishness."

"Please, say no more. There is no need to apologize to me."

"But…"

"This is my personal work. Take no notice of it."

Work. It was as he said.
There was no other reason for him to escort me above work. It was so obvious I scolded myself for getting depressed. *You should be happy you can even be together like this.*

By now I think everyone knows the second reason why I'm on cloud nine.
And that's because Sir Leonhard is my guard for the day.

My real guard is Klaus.
However, sorrynotsorry, today he had a previous commitment at his parents' home and had to leave. His older brother was getting married, an auspicious occasion.
Go on, go on, have fun at home. You take your time, no need to hurry back!
Though I was sending him off with a light heart, Klaus was still unwilling to go.

His excuse? On the same day, I had plans to travel outside.

If you were only staying inside the castle, then I can agree to relinquishing my duty once in a while. However, if it involves traveling outside, then that is a

completely different matter, Klaus grumbled.

He became even more reluctant to leave when he imagined something happening to me en route.

I can only entrust your life to a knight of more skill than myself, he continued to grumble.

I think he was trying to brag about his position as one of the top five most powerful guys in the royal knights.

I *am* happy he worried for me, but…my urge to kill was welling up. He's an honest to goodness full blown stalker, *not* to be trusted.

His flags were the only ones I couldn't destroy myself, so I've stopped trying to. Since the second son can't be absent on the long-awaited day of the wedding, and I also had immediate need to confirm the destruction of Lady Emma's Death Flag with my own eyes…
I guess I have to wait, I decided.
But there was a man standing nearby who couldn't bear to watch my troubled expression and he offered up his own name.

That man was Sir Leonhard.

Even Klaus can't possibly find fault with the greatest swordsman in the entire kingdom, and he reluctantly left for his parents' home.
I did feel guilty for troubling Sir Leonhard with my problems. I *am* sorry, but…
Dare I say it? Great going, Klaus! Good job!
Also, thanks for sharing your happiness with others, Klaus's big brother!

"Besides," he said.

"?"

"As a bonus, I get to escort the pretty princess. There is no man alive who would not be happy to."

"!"

H-how *smug,* but it suited him.

The destructive power of a smile on Leonhard's face was beyond measure; after all, it was a face that defied approach, if not a downright fearsome one.

He’s one of those so-called gap moe guys. If he turned those seductive eyes on her, there’s no woman alive who would not fall in love with him.
It goes without saying, I fell long ago.

If it was Sir Leonhard, no matter what he asked of me, I wouldn’t be able to say no to him. He could do no wrong in my eyes. Even if he uprooted me, I could still grow.
That’s what I say now, but if he starts to spout the same lines as Klaus, I’ll definitely, *completely* ignore him.

“I must remember to thank Klaus. He should be arriving at home right about now. I can just imagine that bitter look on his face.”

“……”

I came crashing back to reality at Sir Leonhard’s merry words.
Klaus will definitely be a pain in the ass once he returns, won’t he…?

The Reincarnated Princess's Bewilderment. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Bewilderment. (2)

I'm not a very expressive person, so I'm sure I looked as emotionless as ever. If there ever was someone who excelled at reading expressions though, and was well-attuned to the worries of others, then that person would be Klaus. I smiled bitterly at the thought.

"Is Klaus causing trouble for you, Your Highness?"

"What does that mean?"

"Exactly what it means," Sir Leonhard said quietly, eyes calm.

I couldn't sense an ulterior motive, but this was too different from anything I had ever experienced in the game. I couldn't read between the lines at all. Why in the world, for what purpose exactly, was he asking me that?

Were my words being influenced by Klaus's behavior?

Dumbstruck, I didn't know what to say. I just knew I didn't want to lie to him. Trying to relax, I took a few short breaths and said, "If I said I had no problem, it would be a lie."

"……"

Sir Leonhard smiled wryly at my answer, and had nothing to say. His calm eyes gently urged me to continue.

"He's an excellent guard; I have no complaints to offer. I have also never doubted his ability. However, he's *too* overprotective."

At heart, Klaus was a submissive man.
But if a little danger was thrown into the mix, he'd become completely different. This outing was a good example.

"Klaus is overprotective?"

"Yes. In his eyes, I must look extremely fragile. As my protector, he would

probably want to go as far as shutting me in an ivory tower—he's that tender-hearted. But, I'm an individual with my own will. There's no way I'd ever consent to letting myself get locked up for my 'safety'!"

I became increasingly upset the more I talked.
Watching me, Sir Leonhard's smile somehow became even more wry. He looked like he was trying to soothe a baby having a tantrum, and it was a splash of cold water to the face.
I was mortified. Venting all of my pent-up frustrations onto an unrelated party was something only a child would do.

"No. You are not that weak."

"What…?"

"Klaus is not the type of man to so easily pledge himself to a delicate princess whose only quality is her beauty."

The smile disappeared from his face as he watched me, who had been rendered speechless.
The low tone of his voice deepened with emotion.

"In your presence, he may seem like a dog, but…"

D-dog…?
What an ominous word. If we're talking dogs, I like Border Collies. Or, Shetland Sheepdogs. I don't have a hobby of keeping grown *men* as my pets!

"His true nature is that of a wolf. Even if his master is the only one he cannot bring himself to bite, he is actually a beast who cannot be tamed."

"……"

I couldn't bring myself to make fun of him and say, *"Can't you tame him if you're a sadist?"*
The truth is, anyone who looked at the current Klaus would think, *"He's amazing."*

As mentioned previously, Klaus is one of the top five most powerful knight in the chivalric order. If you considered his age, being promoted to the princess's guard meant that he'd risen incredibly fast in his career.

Our kingdom's chivalric order was exceptional for stressing the importance of ability over social standing. Precisely because of that, there were a lot of off-putting jealousies floating around. There may be no one foolish enough to display it in front of the princess, but I knew he was stealthily targeted from the shadows.
However, Klaus wasn't the refreshing guy he seemed to be. He elegantly dodged violence, and returned insults twofold. He crushed those comrades who would make a foe of him so hard they never dared to come back.

Was there still any meaning to him being a masochist?
Would a masochist be this aggressive? Or, are sadism and masochism really two sides of the same coin? Yeah, I could hardly understand what I'm saying myself.

"Having tamed that beast, you cannot possibly be weak. You are honorable, a princess who would never allow herself to simply be protected. However, sometimes, that can be dangerous."

"……?"

Dangerous?
Because I looked weak, I didn't look dangerous?

I have no idea what he wanted to say. What did he mean when I'm not weak, but dangerous?
I don't know if he noticed my bewilderment or not, but Sir Leonhard continued to look at me with admonishing eyes.

"You are someone who stands on her own feet, thinks with her head, and can accomplish the tasks she sets her mind to. But, there is a limit to how much a person can do on their own. Please, rely on the presence of the people around you a little more."

I blinked several times in response to his unexpected words.

"But, I do…"

There was staggering little I could do with my own power. I knew that, and did indeed intend to rely on others. Take today. Even though it was selfish of me, I had Sir Leonhard escort me around.
He didn't seem to agree, though.

Sir Leonhard shook his head.

“More. You do not do it enough. Klaus feels the same, which is why he becomes overprotective.”

“……”

Even if *Sir Leonhard* was the one saying that, I couldn’t just nod my head in agreement.
I also had my position as princess to consider. I couldn’t just thoughtlessly expose my shortcomings.
But, even more than that, I had no idea how to determine how much I should explain, or to what extent I should rely on others.

Who in the world can I share the future that has not happened yet with?

I obstinately hung my head, and Sir Leonhard smiled wryly again.

“Please, keep these words somewhere in a corner of your mind.”

I honestly didn’t think that I would remember the disappointment in his voice or his words until much later.

That is a story for the future, several years later.

The Reincarnated Princess's Determination.

The Reincarnated Princess's Determination.

"Check."

THMP. With a hard thunk, the White King's means of escape were cut off. Groaning in despair, I glared at the board.

Wasn't there any way to make him live?
Even with the wheels spinning inside my head, I couldn't find a way out.
It was too late to try and pull anything. My small brain couldn't find a way to let the poor king escape.

Teeth grinding, I managed to endure my frustration, and let it go with a sigh. Tipping over the piece of the king with a finger, I muttered in a small voice, "I give up."

Ahhh, geeez, I'm *sooo* pissed off!
How many times have I had to forfeit because of my childish tactics? Actually, no need to ask. I knew how many times without having to count on my fingers. *32.* My game record was riddled with consecutive losses; I was so upset I could hardly forget.

Did I make a wrong move? I studied the board intently, and the sound of stifled laughter reached my ears.
Feeling humiliated, I couldn't help scowling as I slowly looked up at the person in front of me.
If you know anyone who loses and feels good getting laughed at by the winner, I'd like you to tell me.

"It's bad form to laugh, brother."

"Sorry."

Christof slowly narrowed his light blue* eyes, the deep pitch of his laugh sounding very adult.

My brother just turned 13 years old the other day, so it wasn't that surprising.

He sat with his hands folded on his lap, his body deeply sunken into the couch. He now has a maturity and sex appeal that he didn't possess as a child.

"Rose, you show your feelings very easily."

"Do you think so?"

Hmmm. I lightly poked my cheek with a finger.

That's the first time anyone's ever said that.
Just like Chris, my facial muscles don't really get put to work. I'm really grateful when they don't show how unsettled I am, but I always think I'd be cuter as a girl if my expressions were a little more lively.

"When you're upset, it's written all over your face."

"……"

"I only started noticing it when we played chess, but you really hate to lose."

He hit the mark so easily, I pouted and turned my face away.

"Because I'm not winning at all."

I *did* hate to lose. I knew it, too. I didn't actually like conflict, but so long as I was playing I wanted to win. Even if my opponent were my older brother, I wouldn't hesitate to beat him to a pulp.
I don't need to be cute. I'll knock down all of my foes with *girl power!***

"Your moves are too tame. You need to remember to be a little more forceful."

His reasoning made a lot of sense, so I didn't say anything.
Only during times like this did I find my beloved older brother odious. He was a little…no, because he was particularly blessed with beauty, he'd become very overbearing—I'm exaggerating.
Even though he was good-looking, he wasn't excessive, and was actually a hardworking person. He seemed aloof, but he was kind to his younger brother and sister.
Damned brother! He's so perfect I can't even diss him inside my heart! What a cheat!

In his few moments of spare time, he'd come by and play chess with me as a way to check up on me.
Last year, Johan went to our neighboring kingdom to study, so Chris has been worried that I'd be lonely.

Damned brother! (second time)
Not only do you have the looks, you're also nice! Are you the hero of some freaking shoujo manga! What are you, a prince! Oh right, you *are* a prince!

"I'll practice until the day I can have an even match with you, brother."

Even though I was sulking a like a sore loser, my brother smiled at me gently. Really, he's such a cheat.

Worrying if there was a double meaning behind my losses, I began to tidy up the pieces. I had assumed Chris would return immediately, but he started helping me.
Even when I said, *I'll do it*, he refused.

"I want to talk with you," he said.

About what?

I tensed up nervously at the sudden change.
Please don't point out my flaws again, I silently wished.

"Before long, we'll be receiving wizards."

"Wizards…?" I repeated, stunned.

A wizard, meaning *that* wizard??
The one who was a love interest, liked corpses, and traumatized me? *That* guy?!

I thought I still had a long way to go until we met, so it was a big shock.
In my mind, I could clearly picture the scenario for his Bad Ending.

Believing he had been betrayed by the Heroine, the Wizard murdered her, then froze her body. While it was not in his habit to laugh, he was smiling in ecstasy, kissing the Heroine who had been turned into an ice sculpture, and said, *"I love you most when you don't say a thing."*

The art for that scene was extremely gorgeous, so it was really popular with some. I didn't feel the same.

I mean, according to his words, the Heroine's character was completely irrelevant to him? In a roundabout way, he was saying that he only cared about her face and body??

Furthermore, the Wizard's Bad Route was very weird. If you wavered even a little, it was instant checkmate.
You weren't allowed to doubt or be afraid of him, either. If you were too compassionate, that was also the end. In order to get on his True Route, you must carefully balance yourself on an extremely thin and unstable tightrope, painstakingly struggling on until you got to the goal.
As evidence of entering his Bad Route, the Wizard will smile and the story will become traumatizing. Even though he never once smiled in his True Route, in the Bad Route, he was grinning ear-to-ear from beginning to end. It was *terrifying*.

Holding onto my stomach, which had begun to hurt again, I continued listening to Chris.

"Their names are Lutz Eilenberg and Theo Eilenberg. No doubt they'll start as apprentices, but they've been placed under the tutelage of Miss Artmann, your teacher."

Apprentices, huh.
Well, for appearance's sake, they had to be called that.

Lady Irene von Artmann was my teacher in the study of medicine and astrology. She was also a wizard directly employed by the royal family.
With her austere beauty and slender frame, it was hard to tell how old she was. Outwardly, she might have been in her early twenties, but judging by her manner of speech, she was obviously someone much older than my own mother.
Btw, mother turned 30 recently.

I'd like to say the the skills of a wizard was limitless, but the wizards in this world actually differed a little from the ones who appeared in fantasy media. There were no flashy spells like Kaboom, Ultima, or Cyclone.

Borrowing the power naturally dwelling inside your spirit, you can call forth fire or water, but it would be weak—fire as big as a lamp, or as little as a spring of water. Furthermore, power oozes out in a small trickle, so you couldn't build it up.

However, even that amount of power was rare.
The majority of wizards either had green thumbs and could raise all sorts of trees and flowers, studied medicine, predicted the weather, or took up jobs as doctors and healers.

The strength of magic is gradually weakening, and will someday disappear entirely from this world. It's quite rare for anyone to be born with the "real thing".
That's why the two of them are definitely out of the norm.

One was Lutz Eilenberg, the Wizard love interest.
He was one of those rare geniuses, and could manipulate water magic at will.

The other was Theo Eilenberg, a support character who deeply affected Lutz's route, and had the promising makings of a great fire-attribute wizard.
By the way, their last names are the same, but they're not brothers. They both came from the same orphanage, and "Eilenberg" was the family name of the priest who raised them.

The reason why they had been sent to the royal palace was for "surveillance", and also, their "protection".

In a world where magic has largely dried up, guys like them who possessed a lot of power are seen as heretics.
If they incited fear in the people, they might become the targets of a witch hunt.
Before that happened, the kingdom intended to protect them, instruct them in the correct usage of their powers, and train them to support the kingdom in return.

"They'll be learning beside the same teacher, so you'll probably have a lot of opportunities to meet. Treat them well."

Honestly, I *was* afraid of meeting them, but I can't *not* meet them.
This time's love interest has no direct connection to Rosemarie. Even if the Priestess were to go after the Wizard, it wouldn't influence Rose's future at all.
However, if he were left to his own devices, we were in danger of corpses piling up.

Ultimately, I'd feel guilty about knowing and pretending not to see. If I did ignore the issue, I wouldn't be able to live with myself for the shame.

I *refuse* to pay for that crime for the rest of my life.

"Yes, brother."

I meekly nodded.

The Reincarnated Princess's Endeavors.

The Reincarnated Princess's Endeavors.

It's all good to prepare myself for the worst, but could two people who didn't even know how to control their powers meet with the princess?

The doubt did occur to me, but it proved to not be a hindrance at all several weeks later.
Even if they were allowed to meet me, I thought it wouldn't have been until they had studied with Miss Artmann for a while, so I was surprised to suddenly find two boys in front of me with chokers on their necks.
Set with a precious stone, those chokers were effective at moderating magic strength, and with it installed, only 30% of the boys' powers were useable.

"Pleased to meet you for the first time, Your Highness. We have been honored with the opportunity to study magic under the tutelage of Lady Irene von Artmann. I am Theo Eilenberg."

Theo Eilenberg was an impressive young man with fiery red hair, and eyes with an unusual mix of red and black.*
He had strongly sun-tanned skin, a cheerful smile, and a large frame unthinkable on a 13 year old. It would be more appropriate to say he better fit the role of a soldier.

"I'm Lutz Eilenberg."

The slender pretty boy who subduedly introduced himself had nearly-white silver hair, porcelain skin, and deep indigo eyes.
They were supposed to be the same age, but you could say he was Theo's exact opposite in many ways.

Treated like a monster all his life, he was defiant and on the verge of becoming misanthropic.
But, he hasn't become twisted yet.

Okay. I'll need to create an opportunity to put a dent in his flag!

Well, it's all fine and dandy to say that, but…Lutz was a tough nut to crack. I couldn't figure out how to get close to him at all.

"Princess, princess! What is this medicinal herb good for?"

On the other hand, I got along famously with Theo from the start. Of course I did. He was friendly from the beginning and didn't put up walls with anyone. We're currently in the middle of reviewing different types of medicinal herbs and their effects in the palace greenhouse. Maintaining the beds as went, someone kept asking me questions—he was a hard worker, with a love for learning. Merrily pointing at an herb, that guy was acting like a big kid.
But, I had a hunch that childishness was calculated in order to ease his way through life—the so-called *worldly wisdom*.
If he focused on establishing contact with the people around him, he could become wildly successful in life.

"You use it to reduce fevers in children. You drink the juice squeezed from the raw plants."

"Ugh, bitter."

"Of course it is."

I smiled wryly at Theo, who was puckering up his face.

"And this? What is it good for?"

"You use that to stop bleeding. If you boil and drink it, you can treat bowel problems. I think it's also effective for cold sensitivity, stomach aches, etc."

"Boil, then drink…this is bitter, too."

"It's delicious if you bake it with bread."

"Huh, really? Even though it's bitter?"

"If you boil it, you can remove the astringency. When you pound it and mix it with uncooked dough, it has a very good flavor."

To be honest, this herb with the jagged leaves was just Japanese mugwort. It would've been perfect if there were also rice and azuki beans. I've looked everywhere but haven't found any. Someday, however, I believed Master Julius would obtain them for me.

“Amazing, princess, you know so much! I want you to teach me more about everything. Hey, Lutz! You should come over here, let’s learn together!”

Theo hailed Lutz, who stood apart from us inside this huge greenhouse watering the plants.
After one look in our direction, he turned away. No response.
Theo didn’t seem torn from getting ignored. He smiled and muttered, *No good, huh?*
I’m so thankful Theo was here with me. If I had been by myself, I’m sure I wouldn’t have been able to muster up the courage to talk to Lutz.

“Lutz, may I come over there?”

“……”

Even when I called out to him, he didn’t respond. When he shrugged his shoulders, Theo and I looked at each other at the same time, and smiled awkwardly. *What’s wrong with him?*
But that pleasant mood was destroyed in a second. Suddenly, I sensed a killing intent behind me, so menacing it raised goosebumps on my skin.

Looking back, I gave the owner of that aura a glare, and called him to attention.

“*Klaus!*”

“Yes, m’lady?”

Even at the receiving end of my glare, Klaus wasn’t cowed a bit.
Instead of being intimidated, he gave me a radiant smile. Seriously, hasn’t he gotten worse with every year?

“*Stop that!*”

“Why is that? When they have been so rude to you, my lady? Their attitudes are intolerable.”

If I let YOU be intolerable, it should be OK, shouldn’t it!
Swallowing the words coming out of my throat, I took a breath instead.

“It’s fine, so stop.”

With a, *By your will*, Klaus stepped down.

If I gave him commands in a calm voice, he immediately relented. I honestly don't know what triggers the switch for this guy.

Someone, *quick!* Take up writing a *Klaus instruction manual*. I don't accept that he'll stay this obedient for long.

"Princess, you are a strange lady," Theo said in a small voice when I dead tiredly returned to maintaining the beds.

When I looked at him, he had an extremely serious look on his face. *A strange one*, he said. What was so strange about me?
My outer appearance resembled my mother, but you can find what's inside among common girls everywhere?

"Really? I believe myself to to be normal."

Cocking his head slightly in doubt, he squeezed his eyes and gave a forced laugh.

"I do not understand what your definition of *normal* is, but the Sir Knight's reaction was correct. If a person were to act rudely toward the princess, they could not complain were they punished. Lutz and I were raised at the orphanage, and are uncultured brats. By all rights, we should not even be able to approach the princess. And yet, not only does she not take us to task for our breach of manners, she is kindly looking after us."

You are a strange lady, Theo said one more time, his voice friendlier than before.

Getting praised to my face, instead of feeling shy, I felt awkward.
Stop, don't look at me with those bright eyes…!!! Especially when I think of myself as a lowly person!

"I'm—"

"Theo. You're getting tricked."

—not such a great person.
That's what I intended to say, but I was cut off in the middle of my sentence. Since when did he get so close? Lutz stood behind Theo, glaring daggers at me.

"She's only acting friendly on the outside to win us over. On the inside, she

must be heaping insults on us, calling us monsters."

"Lutz!"

Even with Theo warning him not to, Lutz didn't stop. He bared his hostility to me.

"You're better off not hiding it, *princess*. The truth is, you find us frightening, don't you?"

But his upfront feelings had the opposite effect on me.
He was like a stray cat hissing, so I found it rather cute. Since he had decided to open up to me, I gave him the truth.

"You're right. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't afraid."

"……!!!"

And his face crumpled in pain.
What an honest child. So much more innocent than I am. Was this the reason why he bared his fangs, so that he wouldn't get hurt?

"Magic is an unknown power to me. *Because* I don't understand, I'm afraid, but I also want to know. I feel the same way about you two."

I don't understand, so I want to.
When I honestly told him my feelings, Lutz swayed with confusion for a second.

"We don't need your pity!" he growled in a low tone. Without waiting for my reply, he turned his back to me and left.

Abandoned, Theo meekly bowed his head.

"My friend has acted unpardonably. Please, find it in your heart to forgive him."

So his innocent act, and childish speech and conduct really *were* just a front. His true self was much more mature than his actual age.

"It's fine. You were put in a tough spot, but we're the only ones here right now."

"You are very gracious, Your Highness."

"I want you to stop talking like that, too," I said, smiling wryly.

He nodded and reverted back to more casual speech, “Got it, princess.”

“Besides, I *do* fear, and pity, the two of you,” I said without reservation.

After gaping at me in astonishment for a moment, Theo gave me a big grin.

“Y-you really don’t beat around the bush! It’s rather manly.”

“Even if I hide it, you’re both so perceptive you’d notice it.”

“Princess, you really are a strange lady. Even if it means the same thing, there should be a lighter way to phrase it,” he said, trying to hold back his laughter, no animosity in him.

I’m much more bewildered Theo would still treat me in the same friendly manner as before. Even if he wasn’t as straightforward as Lutz, I had expected him to put a little distance between us.

Lost in my thoughts, I didn’t notice how he smiled a little differently now, more low-key than the ones he’d given me up to now.

“But that forthrightness puts me at ease. It’s much more believable than the carefully crafted artifice of others who only speak in pleasantries.”

“Theo…”

“I believe Lutz feels the same way. He’s just a stubborn guy, so he can’t easily give in. I’m sure if you give him a little more time, he’ll let his guard down.”

“Like you?”

At my thoughtless words, he boldly winked.
The guy from earlier and the guy now had completely different characters—this Theo was by far less bouncy and spoke in a calmer voice. It was probably closer to his true self.
Just as he said he could find my bluntness trustworthy, I wondered if I could believe that he’d also let down his guard a little.

Only a “little,” though.

Well, that was plenty for now.
Even though they didn’t wish to, in the end they were forced to come to the palace and collared. I can’t help it if they didn’t trust and even despised the royal

family.

If I took that into consideration, their attitudes were surprisingly friendly.

“I’ll do what I can to help you, so good luck.”

He smiled like he was having fun.

“Thanks.”

I gave him a faint smile in return.

I don’t know how hard I’ll have to work, but I’m gonna give it a try.

For now…

“First off, I want you to tell me what his favorite foods are.”

…let’s start by feeding him.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Endeavors. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Endeavors. (2)

“What should I make today?”

Night time, in the kitchen.
I held cooking utensils in one hand, troubled.

“Anything made by Princess Rosemarie will become a gem of superior quality.”

“Klaus.”

“Yes, m’lady?”

“Be quiet.”

“By your will.”

I sighed.
Today, same as ever, I was accompanied by my bothersome guard knight.

Why did he have to turn out so weird?
Inside the game, unless you flipped his masochist switch, he was normally such a great guy. The Klaus now had a faint stench of disappointment.

As you could expect of someone called a *love interest*, only his appearance was top-class, and the rest was spoiled by his words and actions. If I left him alone, he’d start to spout nonsense over every small event like he did earlier. It was seriously annoying.
Praising a little girl at each and every opportunity, for whose sake exactly was this handsome guy doing that?

My mental fatigue was extreme from being stuck with Klaus until night, but…I can’t complain very much right now.
At any rate, the one saying selfish things was me.

The method to shorten the distance between me and Lutz through his stomach has proven to be unexpectedly effective.

Theo told me that Lutz loved sweet things, so I first asked the chefs to make sweets. The refreshments they created were quite splendid, but…how should I put it delicately? Oh, blast it! They're not fit for consumption. *Why don't I make it myself, then?* I thought, but there was no way the princess would be allowed in the kitchen.

That was when Klaus stepped in.
He was the one who set things up and made it possible for me to use the kitchen in the dead of night. On the condition that I would have to be accompanied by him at all times.

"I've made steamed bread before…"

Yomogi steamed bread were quite the hit.
There were no adzuki red beans so I cut up sweet potatoes instead to mix in, but Lutz still seemed to eat it with great relish.

Of course, he liked cookies and madeleines, too. To my surprise, however, I noticed that he preferred Japanese-styled sweets more, so I tried to make red bean paste.
I haven't been able to obtain adzuki red beans, but I substituted in similar white beans instead, and the end result turned out to be a mock white bean paste.

What could I make with the paste made the day before?
There was no sticky rice, so I couldn't make daifuku. Same thing for nerikiri.
If it was going to be like this, it would have been so nice to have sticky rice. Next time I see Master Julius, I'll try asking him for help.

Anyway, what should I do? Cold sweets would be nice for the weather, but refrigerators didn't exist either, so it would be hard to make mizu manju.
As far as I knew, there *was* an icehouse inside the palace, but I couldn't just use it without permission.

All right then, just to be safe, let's make dorayaki.

Lining up the ingredients, I looked over my shoulder and talked to Klaus, "By the way, Klaus, how did the matter I asked you to take care of go?"

"Anything you wish for, I will make happen."

The hand he fluidly stretched out placed a piece of paper on top of the

counter. Whisking the sugar and eggs I had cracked into the bowl, I looked at the paper that had crept into the corner of my sight.
What was written on it was a maid's personal information.

Hilde Kramer, 15 years old.
Huuuh, a distant relative of the wife of Baron Behme.
Family ran a prosperous store. Family included grandfather, father, mother, older brother, and older sister.

"……"

When I nodded my head a little, Klaus snatched up the piece of paper and threw it into the fire.
In an instant, the small scrap of paper burst into flames and turned into ashes.
After confirming that, I returned to making the shell for the dorayaki.
Sifting flour into the bowl, I lost myself in thought while I mixed the ingredients.

Lutz Eilenberg lost his sanity just before he turned 14.
Hilde Kramer was, if my hunch wasn't wrong, the woman who would become the cause of everything.

Like I've mentioned before, in this world, those born with magic are extremely rare. As the first in several hundred years to have such outstanding talent, Lutz was special. The number of people after him were a dime a dozen inside or out of the kingdom, but there was one group of villains in particular who had their eyes set on Lutz and his talents.

To make matters worse, their client was the king of a neighboring war-ravaged kingdom, bordering the Kingdom of Nayvel to the west.
With the air of a buyer purchasing an usual weapon, the king desired Lutz for his own collection—he wanted to wage Lutz's powers for war.
He had someone sent to the Kingdom of Nayvel, their purpose to create a contact inside the kingdom, and act as guide inside the palace.

Lutz was stolen away. Afraid he would be used as a weapon of mass destruction, he attempted to escape, but it ended all too soon and he was captured.
Coincidentally, a young maid had been taken hostage the same time he was kidnapped. Because she had taken care of him ever since they were in the

palace, Lutz had developed a tendresse for the girl, and had had no choice but to obey given orders.

Forced into the battlefield, he massacred countless foes before he was at long last allowed to meet the girl again. That was when he learned the terrible truth. From the very beginning, she had gotten close to him in order to deceive him.

MONSTER! she called him.

Betrayed, verbally abused, Lutz turned the girl who had been his first love into an ice sculpture, incapable of speech.
Soon after, the king was assassinated, and the kindom lost the war. In the following chaos, Lutz ran for dear life. Seeking shelter in the Kingdom of Nayvel, he became a Court Wizard.

I wanted to prevent Lutz and the girl from meeting each other, but I hated to admit her name hadn't been divulged from those passages.
There had also been no illustration image for that scene, so not only were her reasons for betraying him unclear, I also had no clue what she looked like.

While I was wondering what to do, the girl he'd come into contact with finally showed up.
The other maids feared those unknown beings called wizards, and went the around the boys to avoid them. That girl was the only one who assertively went out of her way to talk to Lutz. So *she* was Hilde Kramer.

I'm positive it was her. I *was,* but I couldn't say that with absolute certainty, either. I mean, no matter how you look at it, Lutz had absolutely no interest in her.
According to the game, she was supposed to be his first love, but he was ignoring her attempts to chat with him, and whenever she got close he'd look really annoyed and run away.
I couldn't rule out the possibility that he was just shy, but…considering how harsh his attitude was, that might be pushing it.

There was also one more thing weighing on my mind heavily. I didn't know *why* she was planning to use Lutz.
Hilde was born to a prosperous family, so money couldn't have been what she was after. Besides, a 15 year old girl wasn't capable of coming up with such an

evil plan, was she?
There must have been someone pulling her strings from behind, and there was low chance it was her distant relative from the Barony of Behme. The head of the house was a well-known opportunist who waited to see how the wind the blew before he did anything. He wouldn't have had the guts to stick his nose in something so big.

For those two reasons, I couldn't make up my mind.

While I was covering the pan fried pancakes on top of the board with a damp towel, Klaus addressed me.

"Princess Rosemarie."

Turning my head to look behind me, I found Klaus looking at me seriously.

"Klaus?"

Did something happen? I lightly inclined my head, telling him to continue.

"I can be of even more use to you."

"!"

"If you would but give me the order."

Seeing the warlike expression on his face, the words Sir Leonhard had once said to me before crossed my mind, and I was forced to realize their truth.
Klaus was *not* an obedient dog; he was a ferocious wolf.
The blaze in his bright eyes and his powerful voice invited me to use him. I had a feeling he was saying, *Let me be your strength. I'm prepared to do anything.*

"……"

I tightly pursed my lips, falling silent.
Accepting his allegiance was the only thing I still wasn't ready to do.
All I did was manipulate him, being halfway reliant on his support; I wasn't qualified to agree or disagree.

"You've done enough."

Therefore, I gave him an ambiguous answer with vague words.

"Thank you, Klaus."

I’m sorry, Klaus.

Apologizing to him in my heart, I smiled at him.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Endeavors. (3)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Endeavors. (3)

“Do you actually mean that?”

Theo questioned me, holding a teacup in one hand.
Hearing a loud clatter, I looked up to see the teacup had landed in the saucer, and nodded.

“Is it something to be so surprised about?”

“You really do, don’t you?”

Theo smiled in disbelief, and exhaled gustily like he was sighing.
The more he revealed of himself, the more it became apparent that he was actually quite sarcastic. I’d spoken my mind and asked him straight out, but it wasn’t anything he needed to *laugh* at me for.

You won’t be forgiven! You hurt the princess, you know. You seriously bruised her tender feelings.

I was merely poking around a little, asking about Lutz and the maid.

Hilde Kramer had long, flaxen hair, and veridian green eyes. She was a beautiful, gentle girl. When she blushed and cast her eyes down, it tempted you to protect her. The briefest appearance of her sweet smile shot arrows through the heart of guys who loved the ingénue type.
Such a cute girl was trying her best to make conversation with him, you know? Disregarding my suspicious self, if it had been a normal guy, it would have been strange for him to feel dislike.

Like the Lutz from the game, if he had been a healthy young guy, he should’ve naturally been been moved by her kindness. Yet, why was he so stubbornly rejecting her?

When I asked Theo, *Don’t you think he wants someone to understand him?* we get to the original scene. I don’t get it.

“Ah, Lutz, you came at a good time.”

Lutz was a little late to arrive, finishing up his errands, so Theo brought him into the conversation.

“Huh?” Pause. “*What?*”

I wonder if I’ll get ridiculed again. Even though I’m *supposed* to be the princess. I looked away a little, preparing a cup of black tea for Lutz.
It may not sound convincing for the princess to be making tea, but with the maids backed away, and Klaus devastatingly useless at these sort of things, the duty was left to me.

“Has a maid been acting very friendly with you lately?”

“Ahh…”

Whoa. Things suddenly got chilly in here. All it took was one look to see a storm brewing.
Lutz’s eyes became daggers, and his brows drew together sharply; even his voice became completely flat. If I were the recipient of his anger, it would’ve broken my courage.

“The princess finds it rather strange for you to reject the maiden so adamantly. ‘Doesn’t he want someone to understand him?’ she asked me, you see.”

How was that? Theo’s eyes asked, looking very entertained.

“*What??*”

In a heartbeat, Lutz turned his sharp gaze on me. Scary!!!
Why was he glaring at me with such force?!

Just like Theo, he was probably feeling the same exact feelings of disbelief.
Finally, Lutz sighed and he insulted me to my face, “Are you a fool?”
I couldn’t even retort.

Strange. If there *was* a reason why he was avoiding Hilde, then I wanted to find out what it was. Why was I getting made fun of by these two? I couldn’t understand them.

How unreasonable! I thought, placing a cup of tea in front of Lutz. He thanked me, wearing that sullen expression the whole time. I gave him dorayaki next, and

the crease between his brows cleared and he became happier.
When it came to putting Lutz in a good mood, there really was nothing as effective as sweets.

“Hey, *you*. Even someone like me has the right to choose.”

Got it? he declared in an angry voice.

“That’s *riiight*. If someone had been starving because they were never fed, they would probably take a bite out of the treat in front of their eyes, *but*,” the know-it-all Theo started to say.

“?”

What was he talking about?
Treat? Was he referring to Hilde?

At Theo’s words, Lutz nodded and turned to stare at me.

Since when did the stagnant pools of his eyes become so clear? My face was reflected in his indigo eyes, an empty canvas the morning star shone brightly across.*

After staring at my face for a short while, Lutz averted his eyes, and reached for a snack. He finished off the sentence, “Who would go after poisoned meat when they’ve been stuffed to the max with first class treats? They’d be a fool,” and took a bite of my handmade dorayaki.

Huh? It wasn’t a metaphor, but a direct expression? By first class treats, did he mean the dorayaki? Perhaps Hilde was also trying to win him over with food, but…
Tainted meat? There’s no way a person would eat something like that.

Could it be? Has Lutz noticed something fishy behind Hilde’s kind façade?

I wanted to ask him what made him so suspicious of Hilde, but before I could open my mouth, Lutz muttered in blank amazement, “What is this, delish!” and stared at the dorayaki, eyes rounded.

“……”

I was happy he thought it was good, but right now I wasn’t trying to have a chat with him about dorayaki.

“So soft and moist! Hey, tell me the truth, what is this thing? The filling is really weird. It’s not jam or cream. It’s sweet but not heavily so, it’s seriously too good!”

Heeey, Lutz. The princess is trying to have a serious conversation with you right now.
It’d please her more than anything. Read the mood. The mood!

“Lutz. The princess looks like she wants to ask you about the maid?”

“That’s not worth my time. This is more important, don’t you think?”

As if!
Hey you, when you compare your future to dorayaki, you’d rather choose dorayaki?!

I pressed my forehead, waiting for the headache to pass.
Next to the dorayaki-entranced Lutz, Theo was looking at me with gross amusement.

You damned secret *sadist*…

Pushing my disgust out of the way, I asked Lutz, “You like it that much?”

His eyes lit up, unusually so when they were always half-closed with disinterest. What a great sweet tooth.
Poison couldn’t bring *that* out.

“I’ll make it again next time. I’ll change the filling.”

“No need. This tastes better than jam or cream.”

He *really* liked the red bean paste.
Well then, maybe I can make it with Japanese chestnuts. However, there were precious few white beans, so yuzu flavoring…nevermind, I don’t have yuzu.
Cold dorayaki for the season would be delicious, but…the icehouse, how could I get permission to use it? Looking at the wondering face of Lutz, I hit upon a solution.

“Ahhhh!”

I struck the palm of my hand with my fist.
Even if I can’t use the icehouse, there was a refrigerator right in front of me!

“Heeey, Lutz. You wanna try making frozen sweets with your magic power?” I asked.

“What…?”

“Uh…”

Lutz’s and Theo’s eyes became perfect circles in synchrony, and they stared at me with their mouths wide open.

“Frozen sweets?”

“Right! All the I need is fresh cream, eggs, and sugar. No worries, I’ll make sure to get permission from Miss Irene.”

Miss Irene looked strict, but she wasn’t inflexible. She liked anything that amused her, and if I told her it would make good practice, I’m confident she would permit it.
If I wanted to make real pastries, fine control of his magic power would be necessary. He would need to keep it a continuous, uniform temperature, so I’m sure it would prove fairly challenging.

When you think of it that way, don’t you agree it was a great idea?
Lutz can train his magic, and I can eat ice cream!

While I was lost in fond memories, Lutz said in a withering voice, “Hey, *you.*** Are you planning on turning me into an icehouse?” His head was hanging down so I couldn’t see his expression, but his shoulders were shaking.

Oh, crap. Did I make him upset?

“If Lutz is an icehouse… Then am I a stove…?”

Theo was covering his mouth with his right hand, head also bowed down. Like Lutz, his shoulders were shaking as well.

Oh…! Now that he mentioned it, I also had an oven right next to me.

If my inner voice were to leak out right now, they probably wouldn’t hesitate to yell at me. Keeping my mouth shut, I ransacked my thoughts.

Did I say something rude? It hadn’t been my intention to make fun of them. On the contrary, I thought they had great abilities.

Apologizing might be the only right thing to do.

"Lutz, Theo, I'm—"

"BWUAHAHAHA!!!"

—*sorry,* I murmured, but my voice was drowned out by their loud honking.

"What?"

I froze, taken aback.
They were roaring with laughter, their bodies bent forward. Sometimes they'd cough violently in the the middle of their booming laughs.

"Hey, *icehouse!*"

"Hey yourself, *stove!*"

They pointed at each other, calling each other those names, until their labored breathing became serious.
These…these *assholes!*

"You two…"

"Pr-princess, you're the best!! Capturing the wizard with the greatest level power, and using him as an *icehouse…!!*"

"This is too ridiculous! Just a few weeks ago, you were saying you were afraid of us. Isn't your sense of danger too underdeveloped?!"

"……"

I did say I was afraid of their unknown powers, so even though Lutz was making fun of me for having a bad memory, I couldn't refute him.
My face stiffened. So I'm the worst for capturing two genius wizards and treating them as a *refrigerator* & an *oven*. Ending the dorayaki topic, we were supposed to switch to the maid. The fact that we seriously moved on to desserts instead may have made me too miserable to say anything.

But you know, they didn't have to laugh *that* hard.

"You're *heartless*…"

"So-sorry. Princess."

If you laugh when you apologize, you definitely won't be forgiven!
Frowning, I fell silent and waited. They eventually managed to bring their mirth under control, but then they suddenly started clearing their throat, and I was reminded anew that they were only deceiving me.
These *assholes* really had no intention of apologizing!

My foul mood dropped to the pits, and turned away from them in a huff. Call me a brat if you want to. I *am* a brat. I'm a 10 year old *bishoujo!*

…I'm very sorry, I got carried away.

"This will make you feel better."

I raised my head in astonishment when Lutz leaned in close to gently pat my hair, a rare smile on his face.
Considering it was this tsundere, my eyes opened wide at seeing that gentle expression.

"Look. Because you're like that, our stomachs are already full. Got it?"

"Right, right. We're satisfied, so we don't need anything else."

They said it kindly, trying to console me, but I couldn't feel myself calm down. I wondered what they meant, saying that their stomachs were full, that they were satisfied? I *wondered,* but I didn't have luxury of exploring those thoughts deeply.

First things first, I needed to take care of the danger in front of me.

"Lutz, could you stop patting my head immediately?" I asked him seriously, and he stared at me in question.

It wasn't about me trying to hide my embarrassment, or because I hated being treated like a child.

"Klaus's blood thirst isn't completely hidden."

The Reincarnated Princess's Worry.

The Reincarnated Princess's Worry.

After pacifying the nearly berserk Klaus, I somehow managed to return the conversation back to the real question, and parted from Lutz and Theo after hearing what they had to say.

From here on out there was little chance of Lutz and Hilde getting close, but I couldn't bring myself to hope his Abduction Flag had been broken off.

At any rate, with the other royals entangled in this mess, I doubted the threat would simply disappear. If Hilde messed up, they would only bring out the next trick in their bag.
I urgently needed to uncover the identity of the person behind Hilde, but good information was unlikely to just come rolling in through the door.

And someone who just so happened to possess information was Theo.

Because of the magic power they have possessed ever since they were born, Lutz and Theo have become well adapted to sensing the bad intents of others. They excelled at reading through lies, and and seeing past the façade of others through their countenances, behaviors, and manners of speaking.
They easily noticed Hilde's hidden agenda.
No doubt something was being schemed, but *what* was still unknown. My premonition that something was going to happen soon was merely a guess, so I couldn't put a finger on *when* it might take place.

Anyway, because Hilde only focused on approaching Lutz, Theo slipped under the radar and was left in a position to observe her actions.
It only happened once, but he saw her moving to a place where she could avoid public scrutiny. Unnoticed, Theo followed her, and what he discovered was a clandestine meeting between Hilde and a man in hiding.
They were having a dispute, with Hilde desperately clinging on to the man as he shook her off.

I've hit upon the mastermind, haven't I?
He *must* be the one who instigated Hilde's suspicious behavior; the blackguard who would spirit Lutz away.

If Hilde wasn't taking part in this criminal scheme for gold, riches, or even prestige, then was she willingly doing it in order to have her affections returned by the man she had fallen in love with?

If I could think of it that way, it was only natural to assume the game's original Hilde and Lutz had both been duped and betrayed by him.
It must have been his intention to sell the girl together with Lutz from the very beginning, as blackmail to ensure the boy's obedience. After Hilde discovered she had been thrown away, she in turn rejected Lutz.

What a *scumbag.*

I couldn't forgive Hilde for planning to use Lutz, but it was also a true waste for her love to be taken advantage of like that. It was unforgivable.

In spite of the fact that without any sort of proof it was all pure conjecture, I was nevertheless livid. Inside my mind, Hilde had blown up to become an earnest young maiden quietly nurturing her first love.
Meet Rosemarie von Werfard, 10 years old. Her hobby is having grand delusions.

Well, for now, whether it was the truth or not would make itself clear soon enough.

My top priority was finding out everything I could about that man. At the moment, the only information I had came from Theo's testimony. It seemed like that man wore the guise of a Royal Knight, so I planned to start tearing down the layers of this mystery from there.
I needed to conduct my investigations with as much stealth as possible, but with so much ground to cover, my options were practically nonexistent. I was in a delicate situation.
In the meantime, Hilde might get discarded, and Lutz might get swept away through a special passage.

I had to do everything in my power to stop it!

“Bright-colored, long hair. A slim build, and left handed?”

Hmmm. Repeating the description I gave, he brooded.

“Yes. Are you aware of such a man?” I asked Sir Leonhard, and he nodded with not a little hesitation.

“Well…I dare say I might.”

I was pressed for time, so I decided to go ahead and consult with Sir Leonhard in my need for haste.
Klaus *was* a member of the Royal Knights, and he had the unique ability to make friends with anyone, but that exact ability made him very inclined to bias. And those he had no interest in, he thoroughly *refused* to take notice of.
Sir Leonhard, on the other hand, had a more open mind. I chose to go to him, anticipating he would provide better information when asked.
By no means did my personal feelings come into play. Probably.

Actually, it was likely Sir Leonhard understood exactly who I was asking for, but he seemed reluctant to disclose that information.
For a moment, he fell silent, considering me. At the end of his unclouded, obsidian gaze, it seemed like he could see straight into my heart, and it made me uncomfortable.

“I would tell you, but for one concern. Why do you seek this man out? I would like to hear of your reasons.”

“That’s because…”

I didn’t know what to say.
I couldn’t tell him the true reason. If I did, I didn’t have a single piece of proof to show that the man was a criminal.
On the other hand, I didn’t want to lie to Sir Leonhard.

What could I do? I sank into silence, unable to think of a reason good enough to dodge his question.

“Is it a difficult matter you cannot bring yourself to speak of?”

“N-no. Nothing like that…”

At my suspect behavior, Sir Leonhard openly stared at me, looking like he was

trying to pry the truth out of me.

Ahh, crap. I'm starting to sweat.
My thoughts chased each other around, but no good idea came to fruition. Time only passed cruelly, and all I could do was stand stock still in front of Sir Leonhard. I don't know how he interpreted my silence, with me refusing to look up, but the conversation suddenly went in an unexpected direction.

"Women tend to fall in love with him easily, could it be?"

My head shot up and I shouted, reflexively denying his words, "You're wrong!!"

Sir Leonhard stared at me in surprise.

It was possible his words hadn't been serious, but said jokingly to break down my mulish attitude, a silly topic to start the conversation.
But, I couldn't run with it.

"You're *wrong*…"

He was the only one I *never* wanted to hear that from.

Resisting the urge to shed my welling up tears, I kept lips shut.
Seeing me thus, Sir Leonhard deferentially bowed his head.

"My sincerest apology. I have regretfully caused you distress you with my worthless jest."

"……"

When I silently shook my head, he looked even more worried.
I suddenly realized how much I hated being a child at a time like this. If I wanted to smooth things over, I should have gone along with the joke from earlier. Most of all, I hated that I was still a 10 year old child. At the earliest, it would take another five to six years before he could start looking at me with interest. It would be of greater help for him to properly present me with all of his knowledge, more than anything a demonstration of his devotion, hearing him call me lovely or something else perhaps, could do.

Even though I knew this, all I could do was keep my mouth shut, so I became annoyed with myself.

Why couldn't I be more agreeable?

Bending down, Sir Leonhard whispered into my ear, "Niklas von Buelow…"

"Huh…?"

I looked up, and saw the regretful smile on his face.

"The name of the man you seek."

"……"

He told me the name, but I was more lost than glad. He had been holding back so much earlier, why did he suddenly decide to disclose that information to me? Seeing the bafflement on my face, Sir Leonhard bowed his head once more.

"Your Royal Highness, I duly apologize for testing you, one most honorable, with my words. However, please do *not* approach that man unless absolutely necessary," he told me, an extremely serious look in his eyes.

"……"

Sir Leonhard was a great soldier, his name renowned throughout the surrounding kingdoms. Exposed to that sharp gaze of his, you'd feel like a frog being preyed upon by a snake, unable to make the slightest move. Overwhelmed, I went rigid.

Noticing how frightened I had become, his relaxed his gaze, but…
That had greatly surprised me. Did Sir Leonhard lessen up on me because I had made him worried with my tears?

"Klaus!"

After calling to Klaus, who stood slightly apart from us in a different spot, Sir Leonhard whispered something to him in a voice so low I couldn't make out a single detail.

Why was he telling me to be wary of this Niklas?
Even if it was another kingdom as I suspected, in the game the culprit wasn't supposed to be noticed. If we were to pay attention to him, then he probably wouldn't be able to slip through the castle's defenses.

I had a feeling the end result would create an inconsistency with the game.

“Got it?”

“Understood, Commander.”

That’s right… Here was another discrepancy. At the start of this year, Sir Leonhard was ordained Commander of the Royal Knights.
Certainly, he *was* already Commander inside the game. However, at this point in time, his promotion had come to pass too quickly. The details revealed inside the game said that he had only become Commander a little before the Priestess was summoned, perhaps when I was 14-15 years old.

I sensed that this disparity had been caused by me…

When the 5 year old me asked Christof to dismiss all of Johan’s tutors, Sir Leonhard took the place Johan’s sword instructor.
One of those men dismissed had been a royal knight, a man who enjoyed being able to flaunt his position in the the Order, a group which valued true strength above all else. It wasn’t difficult to see why a man like that hated the very sight of Sir Leonhard.
All I had wanted was for Johan to be raised with integrity, but the outcome was that Sir Leonhard, who had been greatly held back, had also been able to display his competency.

Hmm?
Was it because of that?

In the unusual event that he *was* overlooked, it became possible for him to get noticed *simply* because he was at the top…

After his conversation with Klaus ended, Sir Leonhard switched his gaze to me.

“Your Royal Highness, in the event you are to go anywhere, please take Klaus with you without fail.”

“Sir Leonhard…”

I regretted the worry I had caused him. I really did it this time, didn’t I?
Keeping silent, then turning around and sneaking off to sniff out that blackguard after Sir Leonhard had been moved by discomfort to name him would be a nasty move on my part. Even if I say so myself.

“I will…”

I nodded, and he gave a sigh of relief.

The truth was, I wanted to chase down several leads, but I couldn’t even protect myself. If I were go to poking around without a goal, I’d only be a burden on Sir Leonhard.

I should leave the rest to someone else.
Even though I acknowledged I should, I couldn’t get rid of my worry. It wasn’t that I had no faith in others. It was precisely because I knew the game’s endings that I was able to do anything.
When it was all was done and over, weren’t there several ways things could go terribly wrong? I thought, and couldn’t dispel my unease.

I lightly shook my head to rid myself of my negative thoughts, and began to say my farewells.

“Thank you for giving me your time, I truly appreciate it.”

His emotions changed as I prepared to leave. For some reason, he stopped me.

“Your Royal Highness…”

“Yes?”

“If,” he bent down again to whisper into my ear. “If there is something causing you worry, please consider calling on me for assistance before you act.”

“…?”

I will help you without fail, the serious look on his face promised.

Not knowing how to respond correctly, all I could do was let my astonishment wash over me.

The Reincarnated Princess's Worry. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Worry. (2)

"Princess."

"Huh…??"

My mind had wandered, but I came back to my senses when someone grabbed my hand.
Looking up, I saw Theo standing next to me looking at me with a worried expression on his face.

"I think that's enough. Water."

When he pointed it out, I recalled what what I was doing. I was inside the greenhouse, watering the medicinal herbs.

"Oh…"

The round leaves drooped under an armful of drops where I kept dumping water, the earth more than damp enough. If I watered any more, the plants would rot.
I thanked him for stopping me.

"Thank you, Theo."

"You're welcome."

Releasing me, Theo smiled, but it didn't clear away his worried expression, his dark red eyes reflecting the things he wanted to say.

For a brief period he hesitated, looking downward and carefully choosing his words before he said, "Princess…are you worried about something?"
Contrary to his laid back air and behavior, Theo was a worrywart.
Even if he could tell I was troubled by something, he worried about overstepping his boundaries.

"He's right. Hey *you*, something's weird."

“Lutz.”

When in the world did he come up to us?
Lutz was suddenly standing behind me, peering into my face.

“You’ve been out of sorts all day. When others talk to you, you don’t pay attention, and your responses are halfhearted. It’s not like you.”

In contrast to Theo, Lutz was straightforward and always gave me a piece of his mind.
Their appearances were exact opposites. Even their personalities were different, but the worry they both expressed were the same.

“I’m sorry, you two.”

Feeling guilty, I apologized, but Lutz immediately repudiated my effort.

“Don’t apologize! We…we’re not trying to make you do that.”

Maybe he felt frustrated with his inability to explain himself well, because he impatiently shook his head. He wasn’t angry, but the way he spoke was biting, so Theo took over the conversation and backed him up.

“Lutz and I only worry because you don’t seem well, princess.”

Right? he turned to Lutz for confirmation, and Lutz energetically nodded. They made such a good duo.

“If something’s bothering you, tell us. What we can do is limited, but there may be something we can do to help.”

“Thank you…”

What a good pair of children. I was really touched by their concern.
Because I’m the so-called princess, I’ve never made any friends close to my age. I was glad to have these two who cared about me like this.

However, there was no way I could tell them what my true fears were about. I’d already decided telling them about how the future might play out when they’re being targeted would be too risky. There was no telling where eyes and ears might be lurking.

“…but I’m fine. Yesterday was a little too humid, so I didn’t get enough sleep.”

That was only half the truth.
Last night, I was so occupied with my thoughts I couldn't fall asleep. That was the reason why I was so absentminded.

"Then you shouldn't be in such a hot place! Come on, why don't you go take a rest over there."

"Huh?"

Pushed from behind, I was forcefully ejected from the greenhouse, and dragged to the adjoining rest area where ventilation was much better.

"Lu, Lutz?"

"Just do what I say. Don't come back inside the greenhouse today."

"But—"

"We'll take care of the watering, princess. Please take it easy."

Saying that like they were trying to soothe a little child, they went back inside. Dumbfounded, I was left behind with only my guard knight nearby.

"Why not accept their goodwill and take a moment to rest?"

Even Klaus was breaking habit to chide me!
They'd been giving me quite an earful lately. Was I prone to rushing into danger without even realizing it?

"Okay."

When I sat on a chair and relaxed, Klaus's forbidding expression let up.

"I will arrange for something to drink."

"……"

After quenching my thirst with the black tea brought to me, I gazed at the greenhouse.
I could see two figures beyond the glass, diligently watering the plants. Theo with deftness and efficiency, Lutz with clumsy and careful movements.
I thought about how well I'd come to know them, little by little, and vowed I would never allow such good children to become tools for war.

I decided to take a moment to sort through the information I had.

There was a likely chance Niklas von Buelow was the traitor.
Sir Leonhard had told me not to approach the man so I could only watch him from afar, but his physical appearance matched everything Theo had described. He was of slim build, and carried his sword on his right hip. His light chestnut-colored hair reached down to the middle of his back, and he often wore it tied at the back of his neck.

His evaluation as a royal knight wasn't particularly bad, either, and he carried out his duty with solemnity.
While his looks were just average, I could see how his calm demeanor would be popular with the ladies.

I've also confirmed that his family held the peerage of earl. However, it seemed like the the financial circumstances of their purse strings were quite disastrous. The wife of the previous generation's earl had been a big spendthrift, and the Buelow House was now on the verge of ruin. Gossip had it they were somehow only barely managing to hang on to their rank by taking out loans here and there.

If things were that bad, it was easy to see money would be his goal.
However, even if Niklas succeeded and he obtained a vast sum of money in the process, it would be too dangerous for him to remain inside the kingdom. If he were discovered and arrested, no matter how much money he had it would become useless.
Perhaps he had been promised a position in the other kingdom?
Without a perk like that, no one would willing to take such a big risk.

With the doom of his entire family and his own life at stake, Niklas could not allow himself to fail.

"……"

Having gotten this far, something else occurred to me.
Not only was it imperative he not fail, it was already too late for him to turn back. In that sort of pressing situation, what would happen to Hilde when her usefulness was exhausted…?

The Reincarnated Princess's Conflict.

The Reincarnated Princess's Conflict.

Author's note: Things will be taking a turn for the serious in this chapter. I apologize to those who were hoping for something more cheerful. Please hold on a little.

"…!!"

"Princess Rosemarie?!"

I stood up from my chair with a clatter, and turned around in a panic.

Rose, you big fool…!!

I hadn't thought about the possibility of Hilde getting killed at all. On top being aware of their plans, once she was deemed useless there was no way she'd be left in peace!

"Where—"

Klaus chased after me.

Hearing the uproar, the duo in the greenhouse poked their heads out. Seeing my ghastly state, they immediately understood something was wrong, and became alarmed.

"Wait a, hey *you*, what's wrong?!"

"Princess?"

Lutz rushed over and shook my shoulders.

"What happened? We won't understand if you don't tell us!" he said.

I considered his words.

He was right. If I didn't tell them, they wouldn't understand.

But, I *couldn't*. I wanted to confess everything, but in this situation where I didn't even have someone to talk to, it was pure torture.

If I told them, the danger posed to them would only increase.

“I just remembered some urgent business…”

“Huh?”

“I’m sorry. I’ll have to excuse myself for today.”

Lutz seemed to want to say something, but I removed his hands and smiled at him.
Holding back my impatience, I took my leave, walking as normally as I could. I felt their gazes on me, but I didn’t turn back to look.

“Princess Rosemarie, where in the world are you headed?”

“To meet…”

Hilde, I replied in a small voice, and Klaus moved in front of me to block the path, a harsh expression the like of which I’d never seen before on his face.

“I cannot assent.”

Klaus was usually sweet on me. He happily granted my wishes, and almost never denied or refused me anything.

The only time that guy would ever go directly against me was probably when I was putting myself in imminent danger.

“Klaus.”

“I cannot allow you to place yourself in danger.”

My shoulders shook.
Klaus just said it was *“dangerous”*.

“You *knew.*”

“……”

In other words, Klaus *knew* Hilde was on treacherous footing. If he knew, then it only stood to reason his commander did as well.

And yet, *why?*

“…don’t you protect her?”

“She is not my charge.”

You should already know, his eyes reproached me, stone cold.
That was that. Although it was highly likely she would get killed, she was on the enemy's side. There was no way he would protect her.
In the kingdom's eyes, she was one of the traitors.

The enemy could not risk having their movements here known. If they prioritized secrecy, then the girl would definitely be abandoned. They had divided interests, after all.

"……"

THMP. THMP. My heart beat unpleasantly.
I felt painfully suffocated, like I'd run a marathon and couldn't get enough air. My blood pumped rapidly throughout my body, and cold sweat flowed down my back and neck.
Eyes wide, I was on the verge of fainting.

Right now, I was trying to influence the fate of a person.
That truth terrified me more than anything else.

Let's say, for example, Hilde had indeed done wrong.
Even if I didn't personally get involved, it didn't change the fact that I could have done something.

I was close to getting forced into watching a 15 year old girl die without lifting a finger to help.

The burden was crushing.

"Ahh…"

My voice escaped out of me hoarsely. I automatically hugged myself, and noticed my body was shaking uncontrollably.

I'm scared. I'm scared, I'm scared, *I'm scared…!*
How in the world do you make the right decision? As a princess? As a *human being?*

Overcome with fear, I couldn't think at all. My mind was blank, and nothing came to me.
Klaus had kept silent until now, but when he saw how I shook with fear, his

expression gentled.

"Let us return, Princess Rosemarie," he said, indicating the path we had come down.

The soothing sound of his voice took away all my thoughts. I felt like it was comforting me, gently blocking my eyes and ears. *There's no need to see anything scary. There's no need to hear,* it consoled.

"The ones important to you are those boys, and not the girl, are they not?"

"Klaus…"

Guided by his voice, I turned around.
I took a step toward the greenhouse.

Unsteadily, I took a step. Then another, just like a puppet.

He was right. The ones I wanted to protect were my precious friends.
Their names were Lutz and Theo, and they were kind children. Some girl I'd never even had a chat with could not compare to them.
That's right, no matter how you tried to pair her up with the boys, her life was no match for theirs.
I'll listen to Klaus, and do what he tells me. I'll choose them.

I couldn't believe I'd be so *despicable.*

"……"

My legs came to a halt, and my head hung down in shame.

"Princess Rosemarie…?"
I stood unmoving. I couldn't even *respond,* sobs almost leaking from my throat.
I was so frustrated, so lost, I was about to scream.

I was afraid to both go forward and turn back.

I hated both options. I didn't want to go either direction.
Whichever way I went, I'd want to save them. I was greedy, selfish, and self-centered. I wanted to help, to *save* everyone.

I never wanted to say there was nothing I could do.
I didn't ever want to let the matter of someone dying end with a few words.

“……”

I don’t want to become someone like that…!!!

But, what should I do?
There was a limit to what I could do by myself with my insignificant power. Even if I held the title of a princess, I had no real say in anything. I couldn’t influence anyone.

What am I to do? My back was against the wall.
Was there anything…

“If there is something causing you worry, please consider calling on me for assistance before you act.”

The memory of *his* voice played through my head.

“I will help you without fail.”

“Sir Leonhard,” I whispered, sighing.

“Did something happen?” Klaus stared at me in wonder. It seemed like he hadn’t heard me.

I spun on my heel and walked away, pretending not to see the greenhouse.

“Princess Rosemarie!” Klaus raised his voice.

He placed himself in my way again, and I glared at him.

“Klaus, step aside.”

“Even if it is by *your* command, that alone I cannot obey.”

“I do not seek her out.”

“Then, where to?”

“……”

Impatience threatening to run away, I held back my growing irritation, and opened my mouth to speak.
But, before I could say anything, a figure appeared behind Klaus and my focus shifted there. Eyes widening, and I studied that petite frame from head to toe.

A beautiful girl with long, straight flaxen hair, and veridian green eyes. Even

from a distance, I could tell her skin was ashen. She chewed on her lips, her hands folded out front, and the air she gave off was so tragic it made you worry she would throw herself in the water.

The one who just appeared was the person at the center of my emotional upheaval. At the sight of Hilde Kramer, I couldn’t conceal my shaking.

The Reincarnated Princess's Peril.

The Reincarnated Princess's Peril.

Author's note: There will be blood.
Those weak of heart, please turn away.

Face to face, neither of us moved nor spoke.
Hilde was the one to break the long silence that had fallen over the area.

—CLNK.

The sound of her footstep resounded throughout the passage.

"Halt."

Klaus cut her off right away.
Placing himself to protect me, he stared her down with cold eyes.

"The area beyond is restricted. Begone," he commanded her in an unimaginably severe voice.
Reprimanded, Hilde jumped as if she had been whipped. Coming to a halt, the pallid girl looked at me imploringly. Her arms were similarly crossed like mine, her body shivering.

"…Your Royal…Highness…" her voice wrung out.

I couldn't hide my trembling. This was truly my first meeting with the girl. Even if she was asking for help, I didn't know what to do. Klaus stepped in front of me, blocking my view.

"I told you to leave. Did you not hear?"

Klaus placed his fingers on the sword hanging from his hip. The blade rang with a faint sound, but conversely seemed dreadfully loud.

I wanted to talk to Hilde, but the situation was getting ugly. Not sure if she was planning something, or more pressingly, if she dared venture closer, Klaus seemed prepared to cut her down.

“……”

Stand down, I tried to order her, but before I could—

“I didn’t know…!” she yelled. “It’s all…everything is, I…it’s wrong, different…I didn’t know.”

Hilde was confused, babbling incoherently like she was about to go mad.

“What nonsense is this?”

Klaus knit his brows in suspicion, but I felt like I could understand what she had said.

She *didn’t* know things would turn out this way.

It was staggering.
That guy had involved her in such a big scheme, and he had only revealed a fraction of it to her. She was literally a sacrificial pawn. A scapegoat to be used and thrown away.

I was moved to pity.
Just because she doesn’t seem to be lying, it doesn’t mean she’s not, I scolded myself. *If she’s cornered, she may lie.*
Even though I tried to warn myself, my heart went out to her.

“I, I…”

Hilde walked forward with dangerously unsteady footsteps.
Her eyes were sunken in her ashen face, and her always neat hair was in disarray, but she didn’t seem to notice. She looked like a ghost. I couldn’t see how it was possible to fake that.
If it was all an *act* put on to beg for a lesser punishment, then she was really talented at the rare role of a villainess.

“Princess Rosemarie, please stand back.”

With Hilde approaching, one step at a time, Klaus finally unsheathed his sword from its scabbard.
Seeing the dull brightness emitted from its edge, I finally pulled myself together. This wasn’t the time to lose focus.

“Klaus,” I said in a panic, “don’t be too rough—”

“I understand,” he very calmly told me, cutting off my attempts to control him. Seeing him point his sword at Hilde made me uneasy, but there was nothing left to do but trust him now. I took a few steps back. Caught up in my actions, Hilde desperately followed suit, the expression on her face so tragic, it stole my breath.

Wait!

Without a voice, my lips only formed the words.

At that moment, the sound of rough footsteps could be heard in the distance, and a man suddenly appeared at the end of the passage.
Clad in the armor of a royal knight, his suit clanked as he fiercely pushed toward us. Unsheathing the sword hanging from his right hip, he headed straight for Hilde and swung his blade down.

“RUN!”

“??”

Hilde had gone still at his sudden appearance, but she immediately responded to my voice, stepping to the side.

“Nn, *gahhh!!!*”

But without any protection, the sword tore cruelly into her right shoulder. She was blown away by the force; her body slammed into the wall. Crumbling without a hint of energy, she slid down where struck. Blood began to flow from her torn up shoulder, copiously dyeing her clothes red.

“……ah.”

Swinging his sword to rid it of blood, the man turned to me.

“Are you safe, Your Royal Highness?”

He had just cut down a girl, and yet his light tone suggested he was lightly conversing about the weather. His light brown eyes, which had seemed so gentle from far away, were colored with cruelty.
It was Niklas von Buelow.

“My deepest apologies. Because I looked away, you were placed in peril,” he said with a meek expression, but even that looked like a mask he had glued on. I

felt *sick.*

After knocking Hilde off her feet like he was sloppily shooing away a bug, he now tore at the hem of her skirt.

“WHAT ARE—”

And something tumbled down, hitting the ground with a *THNK.* It was a dagger, about 15cm in length.

Picking up the small blade that had been strapped to Hilde’s thigh, he showed it off dramatically.

“The woman in front of you belongs to a group who would do you harm. Unfortunately, the intelligence I acquired came from a source that cannot easily reveal its identity, so it will prove difficult to gather evidence of their evildoing.”

I was stupefied. What the hell was this *wretch* saying? He was carefully laying down one lie after another as if it were an act of breathing.

I had previously been born in a peaceful era, and even after I was reincarnated, I was raised like a flower inside a guarded greenhouse. This was truly the first time I had ever met anyone so depraved.

There was neither anger nor sorrow in his eyes, much less a guilty conscience. Not even mercy. He was as emotionless as if it was merely time for him to get rid of an item that had worn out its uses.

“U, ngh…”

Lying limp against the wall, Hilde moaned a little and stirred.
Before I could even react, Niklas advanced on her. He raised his sword, prepared to strike again.

“STOP!”

“Princess Rosemarie!”

I was running before I knew it, but Klaus held me back.
Up to this point, he had only been carefully watching over the development, but he immediately responded to my movements, probably only concerned about my protection.
I struggled unreasonably against someone who had no gap in his defenses, but

was easily restrained.
I gritted my teeth.

“Your Royal Highness, as long as this woman lives, she will try to harm you. We must dispose of her immediately,” said Niklas.

“You *dare* think you have the authority to decide that? I ordered you to stop!” I roared, even with Klaus holding me back.

But Niklas displayed no hint of hesitation. Like a third rate actor, he exaggeratedly shook his head.

“I will gladly receive your criticism later. However, we cannot leave this woman alone.”

“……”

It was useless. This wretch was indifferent to my attempts to stop him. No matter what happened afterwards, he planned to deal with Hilde here.

My heart was beating painfully fast.
Blood pumped throughout my body. There was a buzzing in my ears, and my head ached.
It hurts, I *can’t.* How do you *breathe* normally?

Even though I was gasping for breath like a fish swept ashore, I couldn’t take in oxygen well. My mind went blank, and while I watched like a fool, Hilde raised her head and met my eyes.
She looked at me with tears in hers, her trembling lips slowly forming the words…

“……!”

SAVE ME!

“Don’t!!”

The blood stained tip of the sword moved in slow motion. The image of the sword swinging down, just before it reached her, burned itself into my eyes.
Even if I cried, even if I yelled, I couldn’t reach them.

“STOOOOPPP!!!”

KLANG!

“!!!”

Something intercepted his sword, and it was sent flying through the air until it embedded itself in a tree. Niklas moaned, holding on to his left hand, a stone half the size of a fist on the ground next to him.

“Ahh…”

“You are in the presence of Her Royal Highness, Niklas. Restrain yourself.”

The voice came from the end of the passageway. A man straightened himself from his throwing position, commanding his subordinate with his low voice. Niklas gulped at the sight of this man’s anger.

On the contrary, my body lost all of its strength.
He wasn’t scary to me. I would never think that. When no one else listened to my shouts, he was the only one who did.

Only Sir Leonhard would grant my wishes.

The Reincarnated Princess's Peril. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Peril. (2)

A great commotion of footsteps came thundering in behind Sir Leonhard, about ten seconds too slow, and Royal Guards surrounded Niklas and Hilde.

"Summon a physician! Our top priority is treating her injury!"

After quick confirmation that Hilde was concealing no weapons, a female guard began staunching the blood flow. Hilde's pallor was terrible, but it didn't seem to be getting worse.

Niklas, on the other hand, had all of his weapons taken away with the exception of his ceremonial longsword. He offered no resistance, both hands held up in surrender, but he didn't look like a cornered man.
Finding his behavior suspicious, I was watching him when he raised his gaze and met my eyes.

"Your Royal Highness…my deepest apologies."

"……"

What in the world did he intend to say after we'd already reached this point? I stayed on alert as he began to bow in my direction. The guards around him stopped him before he could step closer.

"I only wished to protect you, Your Highness, but it seems I stepped out of line."

What the hell was he getting at? I couldn't understand him at all.
Without giving me the chance to catch up with my thoughts, Niklas vehemently began arguing for his case.

"I suspected that woman was aiming for your life, and was driven by the circumstances to act quickly. Due to my lack of experience, I exposed your royal self to danger…what can I do to prove myself?" he appealed to me with zealous passion in his voice.

“……”

Even his expression looked like it was begging, and the Royal Guards surrounding him looked on in bafflement.

“The woman bore me a grudge. Perhaps that is no ground to support my cause, but if nothing else, I must ask you to believe me in my sincerity. I…would never so much as turn traitor to your honorable self.”

Ahh, I get it now.

Because of his devotion to me, my loyal knight couldn’t allow the traitor escape, and went on a rampage. Or something.
Cornered, the woman resented him and tried to drag his good name down with her as a fellow conspirator, but that was a lie. He was completely innocent! Or something.

That was how he intended to talk his way out, with his shabby little drama.

“……”

Don’t look down on me—!

Rage welled up from the depths of my soul, so strong vertigo hit me.
So you intend to cozy up to me to use me, while selling off my precious friends for gold? You have no intention of doing a single thing for the girl you seduced and took advantage of?
You piece of *trash…!!!*

“I—”

I won’t let you get away with that poor excuse! I almost screamed, but I stopped.
Sir Leonhard stood behind Niklas, his gaze so strong it pierced through me. The moment I met his eyes, the words got stuck on the way out and I swallowed my words. No sound came from his lips, but it looked like they were forming the words, *“bear with it”*.
Was it my imagination?

…no, it wasn’t.

I looked at the ground and exhaled.

Calm down, collect your thoughts, I repeated to myself.

Why would Hilde appear in front of me in the first place?
If it was for the purpose of assassinating me, as Niklas implied, it was too crude of an attempt, and she had no previous motive, either. If I believed him, then I couldn't assume she had been sent by him, right?
Except, Niklas also had nothing to gain from killing me, and what just happened in front of my eyes may have been a poor show put on to make me to think that.
Or, perhaps he had gotten close in order to use me as the hostage piece to control Lutz.

If that was the case, then he must have been watching us somewhere.
And in the exact same way, Sir Leonhard with his fortuitous timing had done similar surveillance, but on Niklas, not me.

In other words…
In order to reel in the big fish hidden in the deep…in order to *lure out* Sckellz, the war-mongering nation, this *wretch* was gonna go free.

"……"

Was it by my father's command? Or perhaps, my older brother?
I definitely hadn't seen this coming. Nothing was clear to me.
But, however ignorant I might be, one thing was apparent.

Even if I threw a tantrum right here, right now, not a thing would change for the better.

"I see," I said in a calm voice, keeping my rage locked inside. Moving my stiff muscles, I forced my face into a smile.

Smile, Rosemarie. You can't let your face become unsightly now.
If you're just a useless burden holding everyone back, the least you can do is show them a smile deserving of a princess.

"So you saved me?"

"Your Royal Highness…!"

Relief spread across Niklas's face.
Was I convincing enough? Did I look the part of a young girl showing her

gratitude to the knight who had saved her?

"Niklas."

Under my crossed hands, my nails dug into my palms.
I bore the rage welling up inside me.
So that my disgust did not mix in, I carefully controlled my voice.

"Thank you."

It was the first time my spoken words had ever meant the exact opposite of my true feelings.
While I was thanking him, inside I was screaming, *"Go to hell, you fucking bastard!"*

"I am not worthy," he said in a carefree tone.

I resisted the urge to punch him in the face, and turned my back on him.
I wanted to get away from this filth as soon as possible. I almost began to run, but I reined in my impulse and moved through the passageway with measured steps.

Just as I was about to turn the corner, allowing the great noise behind me fall to an almost inaudible level, I was stopped.

"Your Royal Highness."

"……"

I swallowed, and reflexively came to a halt. Mentally, all I wanted to do was run away, but I couldn't bring myself to brush off Sir Leonhard.

Since when did he replace Klaus?
I had been so desperately focused on myself I hadn't noticed.

"Yes?" I answered him as tranquilly as I could.

Please ignore that bit of hoarseness in my voice. Forgive me for not even turning around.

It's not that I was giving him the cold shoulder—I *couldn't* look back.
I was putting up a pretense of composure, but a glance at my face would immediately reveal my inner turmoil. The crease between my brows could not be

erased, and if I relaxed even a little, various fluids would start spilling out.
I didn't want to show him such a pitiful face.

The sound of his footsteps got closer.

"……"

Don't come here. Please, stop.
Perhaps he heard my wish, because he stopped, distant enough his quiet voice barely reached.

A hush fell between us.
After hesitating for a short while, he sighed.

"Your Royal Highness," he said again. "I am truly sorry."

"Huh…?"

I tensed at his unexpected words. *Why?*
Why was Sir Leonhard apologizing? The one who should apologize was me.

"Please leave the rest to us," he said, ending the conversation and leaving me in the lurch.
Not even considering the disastrous state of my face, I turned around, but I was too late. He no longer faced me, already leaving.

The Reincarnated Princess's Regret.

The Reincarnated Princess's Regret.

Three days have passed since then.
I was informed Hilde's injury was not overly serious and she could already rise from bed. It seems like her interrogation has begun, with a physician close at hand.
Niklas is being monitored and he seems to be behaving himself, but there was hitherto no proof he was in contact with foreign kingdoms. Due to the destruction of evidence in the Hilde affair, all that remained was the girl's testimony, which wasn't strong enough to deliver a decision.
The entire matter could turn into a fruitless argument, especially because it was highly unlikely the girl had been aware of the most important part of their plans to kidnap Lutz.
The system was not *"innocent until proven guilty",* but without evidence it was difficult to convict an earl's son.

Nevertheless, Niklas must be in a bind from having failed to deal the killing blow to Hilde.
The state of being suspected and watched made it difficult to move. He couldn't afford to be abandoned by Sckellz. It was also, I daresay, not how the Order had hoped for the situation to develop.
The knights hadn't bidden all this time only to have the culprits slip through their hands.

If I hadn't gotten in the way, would the situation have been resolved more efficiently? I wondered, but no answers came to me.

I wanted to help as much as I had caused trouble, but what in the world could I do?

Depressed, I sank into my bed and sighed.
I was confined inside again, and now the entire day was already over. Since I barely stirred myself, the night arrived with me unable to sleep at all. I had tried

to read to pass the time, but I couldn't even process what I read.

Half past midnight.
I just finished telling myself I should sleep when a sound—*KNOCK KNOCK*—came from my bedroom door.

"……?"

It was a preposterous hour for anyone to visit an unmarried girl's room, much less the *princess*.
Who could it be? I wondered warily, when an unexpected voice came through the door.

"Rosé, it's me. May I enter?"

"Brother?"

In a fluster, I put on a thin shawl and slipped off my bed. I opened the door to find Christof was standing there with his usual expressionless self.
He looked exactly like he'd been working until this very moment.

"Please, come in."

Who visited a young girl's room in the middle of the night, even if she happened to be his 10 year old little sister? I thought it was out of character for my serious brother, but I still let him in. He was my brother. What else could I do?

"Shall I prepare tea?"

"No need."

He threw himself onto the couch with a plomp, and beckoned me closer with a hand.
Lost, I approached him. When I got close enough, he grabbed my hand and guided me to the couch. Unable to run the opposite way, I was seated right beside to him.

What in the *world?*
A questioned mark danced over my head as I faced him. We were closer than I'd expected, and I stared at my brother's beautiful features in shock.
Even if I hadn't been taken by surprise, this was probably the first we had ever

been so close. I could see the texture on his skin, and the irises of his eyes.
His ice blue eyes looked grey from an angle.

Seemingly unoffended by my fixation on his face, he grabbed my shoulders and pulled me toward him.

“Br-brother?”

Giving in to the pressure, I found myself stretched out on the couch, my head in his lap.
W-wait a minute…he wants me to use his lap as a pillow…?

“Shall we have a little talk?”

“I don’t mind, but…why like this?”

Shaken, I found his actions even stranger than I’d originally thought, but he was otherwise behaving exactly the same. The tone of his voice was even, and no expression marred his face.
Was this how siblings acted? Now that I thought about it, I *had* done this for Johan before, but this was the first time I’d ever had someone offer me the same.

“The hour is late. If you get tired, you can sleep like that.”

“Umm…”

How was I going to do that?
I couldn’t possibly sleep with my head on my brother’s lap! I was so aware of him I couldn’t calm down, and well, it wasn’t very comfortable. Chris didn’t reek of body odor, but his body was quite muscular. He was a guy, all right.

It was obvious there were a lot of things I wanted to say. His eyes narrowed slightly, and the corners of his mouth quirked in amusement.

“Let me do something brotherly once in a while,” he said.

“……”

When he made his request with that mature expression of his, I became embarrassed thinking about how I’d acted like a whining child.
Unable to look him in the eyes, I could hear his quiet laugh when I suddenly turned away.

“Because I can’t even offer a single word of indulgence, I’m only ever strict to you and Johan.”

“That’s not true.”

He had already done plenty for me.
I truly believed that, but his smile turned bitter.

“It is. At your age, you should still be allowed to sit on your mother’s lap, asking to be spoiled. However, because of me, and our parents, you had to obediently hold in all of your worry, anger, and sorrow.”

“……”

“You were there for Johan, but there was no one there for you. You had no choice but to grow up in order to protect him. Yet, when it came to yourself, you insisted you were fine and couldn’t even bring yourself to complain or rely on anyone else. Not to me, nor to those around you.”

“Brother…”

“Even though you are still a ten year old girl,” Chris said, patting my head. Unfamiliar with the act, the motion of his hand was awkward, but heartfelt. Even the gentleness of his voice and gaze made me feel like I was loved, and my eyes started to burn for some reason.

“Brother…”

The moment the energy flowed from my stiff body, the sound of glass breaking could be heard from far away.

“…?!”

I bolted upright like I’d been shocked. But, before I could get off the couch, I was stopped by his hand.

“It’s fine,” he very calmly told me.

Chris should have also known from the all the noise that something was out of place. Nothing should have disturbed the peace, but the palace was in uproar.

“Wha-what…how is anything fine?!” I replied in outrage as the sound of several footsteps ran by. It was obvious something was going on, what the hell?

“Stay here. It’s fine.”

“……”

He looked me straight in the eye, not an inkling of doubt to be seen; just my reflection.

“Rosé.”

“Bro…ther…”

He pulled me into his arms and hugged me close, like he was trying to keep the commotion at bay. Wrapping an arm around my head, he gently covered the ear that wasn’t pushed against his chest.
I could no longer hear. There was nothing else beyond the sound of my heart, and my brother’s.

Right now, even while I was being protected within my brother’s arms, *“something”* was happening.
It probably had something to do with the plans to abduct Lutz being set into motion.
From the calm way Chris reacted, everything was probably going the way he predicted it would.
Meaning there would be no report coming to him, and the Order had also expected this would happen.
As the targets, Lutz and Theo had probably been informed as well.

The only one who didn’t know, the only one kept in the dark…was *me.*
Useless *Rosemarie.*

“……”

I’d wanted to do something, anything. But there was nothing I could do.
I had no power, but *because* I had the memories from my previous life, *because* I knew what could happen in the future, I’d thought I could do something by myself.
Who was I kidding?

This was the response I got—protection by others.
I was powerless.

“Don’t cry.”

The anguished sound of Chris’s voice reached me, his hand sliding down from my ear to wipe my tears.

“Even if I push you to trust me, or protect you without your knowing, in the end, I still let you cry. I’m a hopeless brother to you.”

“That’s not…true…”

It wasn’t his fault; it was *mine*.
I only had to believe in others, but I didn’t even have the strength to do that. I only had to place the entirety of my trust in others as the situation arose, but I couldn’t do that either. It was my fault for being so indecisive.

I want to become stronger.

Impatience and great hunger both filled me from the bottom of my heart.

The Wizards' Struggle.

The Wizards' Struggle.

※The chapter is in Theo Eilenberg's POV.

BAAAM!

KRASHHH!

From my position on the hard surface of the wagon's floor where I'd been discarded long ago and promptly neglected, I quietly whispered, "No need to show off."

My entire body was an aching mess from head to toe. My left arm had gone numb under me, and with my hands and feet bound, I'd been reduced to a wriggling caterpillar. My current state made it rather difficult to maneuver, but I somehow managed to turn face up. I sighed in relief.

BOOM!!!

A fireball trailed across a sky now visible through the tossed up canopy.
This was in no way, as a matter of fact, the achievement of my inchworming self.

"No need to show off," I said again, a dry laugh croaking out.

The name's Theo Eilenberg. Current position—the remote outskirts of the Kingdom of Neyval, on a mountain trail close to the national border shared by the neighboring Kingdom of Vint.

Three days have passed since Niklas von Buelow attempted to kill Hilde Kramer when he was revealed as a spy. In the following events, the royal palace was infiltrated by the enemy, and I was stuffed in a sack and carried to the wagon where I was unceremoniously dumped.
I tried to escape using magic, but could not get a proper hold of my magic due to the limiting effects of the choker. When a wizard with zero strength was prevented from utilizing his powers, it was over for him.

I didn’t want to get hurt, so I obediently lay where I’d been tossed like a sack of potatoes, but it seems like one prodigy with a little too much pride had no intention of doing the same.
A little under an hour after we’d started to climb a steep mountain path, the mouth of my sack was untied. He was now attempting to cut my ropes, and I surmised he’d escaped using the knife concealed in the sole of his shoe.
Right in the middle of his work, a rider from the rear noticed something amiss and stopped the wagon.

Abandoning me in my caterpillar state, Lutz moved himself into a more prepared stance for battle.
His weapons were the small knife in his hand, and three magic stones in the other. By the way, they’re stones imbued with power. They weren’t very easy to use because they were only limited to wizards with high ability, and could only be used once before they broke and disappeared.
The magic stones Lutz held had been created by our master, Lady Irene von Artmann, as a means for self-defense because his powers had been sealed.

For that reason, Lutz was able to shoot fireballs—magic of an attribute his exact opposite—into the sky. The problem was…the one he just sent off was his last. It signaled the end for him.

Inevitably, Lutz came back after his struggle.
He was violently tossed inside, a horrible sight to hold.
I checked to see if he still any other weapons on him, noticing a great many bruises on the exposed upper half of his body. His shoes had been taken, so he was now barefoot. To top it off, he’d been tied up in circles with rope. The finishing blow came from the shining choker.

…a mysterious force instinctively nudged me to look away.
He owned looks of unparalleled beauty, but it was also his misfortune. I could only view him like a pitiful pretty boy who had been roughened up by a bunch of perverts.

“Lutz… I’ll tell the princess not to probe too deeply into the situation with your ass.”

I tried lightly joking about it, but the eyes he turned my way looked like they

could kill. They promised to moderately beat me to a pulp, in sync with his irritation.

“Before that happens, I’ll thrust an icicle into *your* ass.”

I sighed without a drop of fear, and shrugged.

“There’s no point in resisting, you’ll just get hurt. Be obedient. We can’t even use magic, how were you gonna run away?”

“Shut up. Don’t order me around.”

Lutz abruptly turned his face away.
Shaking my head in amazement, I faced the other way.

A short while later, a single man climbed aboard.
Until now, he hadn’t been riding alongside the wagon so that he could keep an eye on the pace of the wagon, but I knew I had to an eye on him.

“Don’t cause too much trouble,” he said, scowling at us.

I knew him.
‘Twas the Royal Knight, Niklas von Buelow. The man who’d turned traitor against his masters, the people he’d vowed to protect.
It would be convenient if he came closer.

“At any rate, you brats have no idea where you are. It would bode better for you to make your masters happy and earn their favor,” he said with a sneer, not even trying to hide his contempt.

“Ohh, I see… Pet dogs should act like pet dogs, and work hard to please their owners,” I said with a smile.

Niklas snorted as he laughed.

“Now here’s a good attitude!”

Well. I could say things were looking favorable.

Up to this point I’ve been following a script that had already been prepared beforehand.
The attack on the palace, the abduction of us apprentices, even Lutz’s blunder—

everything was going according to the scenario First Prince, Christof von Werfald, had planned. Naturally, anyone untrustworthy had been excluded.

Going back in time, three days ago.
The night of the day Hilde Kramer had been attacked, we were led to a small and narrow room under the pretense of an interrogation.
Entering like we were getting locked up, we came face to face with distinguished personages. The First Prince, the Commander of the Royal Knights, and our master, Lady Irene von Artmann.
We gulped as the First Prince said to us, *I ask for your cooperation.*

For a short time after that, he went into details about everything that had been happening under the surface. The King of Sckellz was scheming to have Lutz abducted, and the one to guide his men would be a member in the Order of the Royal Knights. The maid who had been approaching Lutz lately had been the underling of this spy.
In order to seal her mouth, he tried to kill the maid but the princess happened to be present for everything.

At first, we were dumbfounded, but we gradually began to piece things together, making us want to kick ourselves.
We looked at each other, my identically…no, Lutz looked even more harsh than I, biting on his upside down lips. He kept his hands in a fist with all his strength, shaking slightly.

“Then…the princess had always protected us?” Lutz asked in a daze, and I remembered something.

The princess had been awfully interested in the matter between Lutz and the maid.
If I believed talks of love was something young girls of marriageable age did because that was what they were interested in, then there had been no indication of enjoyment on the part of the princess. If I had to put it into words, I remembered how worried she’d looked, waiting to see how Lutz would react.
It was clear now the princess had been fearful Lutz held affection for the maid, and that it would be used against him.

She'd tried to stay by our sides as much as possible, making use of spare time in her busy schedule. It had probably been all for both of our sakes, so that she could have the guard who had been assigned for her own safety protect us.

Such a young girl had tried so desperately to spread her arms to protect us. And yet, what the hell did we do? We knew something had been troubling her, but we hadn't noticed at all that *we* were the cause of her worries.

"What a disgrace… We're pathetic."

I wanted to laugh at how hopeless we were, but I couldn't even do that. All that leaked out from my twisted lips was a hoarse voice.

"Why-why did you let the Princess do something like that…! If I'd been aware of the situation, I could have dealt with it by myself!!"

It wasn't something we could simply end by physically beating up the enemy.

"Calm down, Lutz. You know it's not that simple," I reproached him, and Lutz ground his teeth in vexation, turning his face away.

"……"

"I confess to using my little sister to get the end results, but I never ordered her to do anything," the prince quietly said without expression, carefully watching us.

What did he mean he *hadn't* ordered her? Unable to understand his objective, I looked at him questioningly. The prince closed his eyes and gave a long sigh.

"I said she was worried about you two, but I will say no more on the matter. When I caught wind of grievous information that the possibility of a nation-wide conflict could break out, did you really believe I would have told the young princess?"

"……"

"She's clever. She has the ability to take action. Without anyone ordering her to, she analyzed the situation in her head, and was able to move everything in a direction that brought about the very best results. Sometimes, I'm struck with the ridiculous notion she may even be able to see straight into the future. She is my brilliant little sister. This time, however, her brilliance has brought about the

least desired effect. She has been dragged in a plot she should have never been a part of."

Our eyes were wide open.
If we were to swallow everything he'd said without challenging it, then he really hadn't ordered the princess to do anything. Instead, she had sensed our danger, and had acted alone using her own judgment.
Almost as if the young girl had finally reached beyond her adolescence into adulthood.

Her brilliance could not be settled with just words. With the information we previously lacked before now given to us, I connected the strange events that had happened inside the castle, going from dot to dot until I arrived at an answer, and closed in on an impossible talent. Simply put, visions of the future.

"To make matters worse, she has even caught the notice of a ruler."

"A ruler…you don't…?!"

"No," the Prince said, cutting short my words, which had come as quick as the blood had drained from my face. "I don't mean Sckellz, but the ruler of our kingdom."

Ahh, that was good… I'd gone faint at the thought of the princess getting noticed by that war fiend.

"Our kingdom? In other words, your—"

"That's right. My father."

Even though he was quite lost, Lutz asked and the prince nodded in confirmation.

"However, to that person we are not children. We are nothing more than underlings related to him through blood. Those he deems useful will be put to work, and everyone else ignored. For her sake, it would be better for him to decide she is useless, but…"

It seems like she has "use" after all, the prince remained expressionless when he muttered that, but his voice became extremely bitter. Even the prince seemed to find it an unpleasant turn of events.

“Use…? What did he have in mind for the princess?”

“Bait.”

“WHAT…?!”

“Our foes are aiming for the two of you, but they need someone to manipulate you two so that you’ll as you’re told. Right now, there is no one more suitable for the job than my little sister.”

“Wh-what the hell…?” Lutz said, his voice shaking.
Was he holding back? He looked extremely pissed off, ready to snap at any moment. Below his breath, he muttered, *Don’t screw with us!*
It’s probably a little too late now, but we’ve been acting very rudely towards His Royal Highness. My reasoning told me I needed to stop Lutz.
But, against my better senses, the words I needed to stop him never came out.
Truth be told, I felt the same way.

“In other words, you’re letting her get kidnapped so that you can round up the whole lot in the righteous name of rescuing the princess?”

Don’t screw with us!

The princess wasn’t born as royalty for the sake of getting dragged into this mess!
We, *I* didn’t stay by her side to get involved in this…!

A terribly brutal desire welled up from the bottom of my heart.
As if it was in concert with my feelings, my body temperature rose incredibly, and heat gathered in the palm of my hands. The controller that had been installed around my neck sparked to life, making a keening sound.

“Calm yourself, fool apprentice.”

SPLASH.

“……?!”

Cold water literally poured over my head, leaving me stunned.
A slender and beautiful woman sighed as she looked at me. With her carefully arranged black hair, and a monocle in her left eye, she looked wise and had a beautiful face, but there was an overall impression of inflexibility.

She was our master, the one who had carefully supervised us until now. Lady Irene had summoned water from above with magic to rain down on me in order to stop me from losing my cool, even though she was a flame wizard.
She was the only one in our kingdom who could call upon magic of her exact opposite attribute so easily.

“Prince Christof would not permit such an atrocious deed.”

“Uh…”

“Observe how displeased His Highness is, all because the princess is so *adorable,* so *cute* he cannot hold back his emotions.”

“Miss Artmann.”

Even with the prince’s chilling glare fixed on her, my master was not perturbed at all. Gracing him with a smile, she easily evaded him.

“Goodness, how rude of me.”

Perhaps he understood he was no match for her with words, because the prince let her audacity pass without reprimand. A sigh slipped from him, and he continued our conversation.

“As I mentioned before, I don’t want my little sister further involved. Therefore, your cooperation is essential.”

The Wizards' Struggle. (2)

The Wizards' Struggle. (2)

※ The chapter continues in Theo Eilenberg's POV.

The speed of the wagon had dropped as it lumbered up the slope, but it has begun to increase again. It seems like we've crossed a pass.
With the sound of wheels like they'd rattle off for music, I thought back on the words of the Commander.

When Lutz and I nodded agreement to the prince's request for help without a hint of hesitation, the Commander took out a folded piece of paper, and spread open the aged parchment, displaying a map.
To the north of the Kingdom of Nayvel, there was a belt of craggy mountains, a natural border with four kingdoms crowding around it.

The shortest escape route from our kingdom to Sckellz requires crossing a mountain, he'd said.
Whichever route Niklas took, it was impossible to escape without assistance from a neighboring kingdom, but if he went by mountain roads, he could cut down travel to the bare minimum.
Compared the highways on the open plain, there was also less danger of getting spotted. However, because there were no means of escape, the likelihood that he'll use an unknown route wasn't out of the question.

That is where I make my appearance, my master piped in.
She dropped three magic stones into Lutz's palms. They allowed him to shoot fireballs, so after he put up an appropriate show of resistance and he was struck, he should aim for the sky.
If we were on a mountain road, do it after we had started climbing for an hour. If we were on the highway, then when we passed through a town. The view is more likely to obstructed, so we'd have to rely on the surrounding sounds and the surface of the land to make our judgments.

To make our enemies drop their guard, we were taught how to use visible weapons, so that when it came time to act we absolutely did not use magic.
For that reason, Lutz was entrusted with the magic stones with an attribute he had absolutely no affinity for. I was warned not to join in by way of precaution.

Even when we were restricted inside the castle, the reason we didn't put up a big fight was for the sake of deceiving our colleagues into believing that as long as we were collared our powers would be suppressed.
The fruit of our efforts? They gave up on taking the princess along with us. If there were two of us, they believed it would be easy to mutually have one to control the other.

With His Royal Highness sticking to the princess, it wouldn't have been possible for them to get to her in the first place. There was no safer place in the entire kingdom than the princess's room right now.

His Royal Highness had promised he would never let anything happen to her. That's why we'll do everything that we can on our end. We'll struggle. We'll fight.

We *will* return. To where she waits for us.

"……"

A chill.
Something cold touched my wrist.

From behind, Lutz had created a small blade from ice and slipped it between my hand and the ropes. I kept the blade in my palm the way it was and slipped it up and down. I pretended to change the direction my body was facing and cut the ropes at my foot, then gathered heat in my hand and vaporized the ice.

All that was left to do was wait.

If we had traveled by highway, the horses would have been changed for fresh ones in towns along the way. By choosing to go the shortest route, they'd been forced to use the same ones.
The horses were already at their limits, but were not even allowed a moment's respite. I assumed we were meeting others soon.

If the men waiting near the national border between the Kingdoms of Sckellz

and Vint were hired hands, then we might need to march as far as the castle. I wanted to avoid that. The closer we got to the capitol, the lower our chances of escaping became.

But nothing was for sure yet. The king had gone to great pains in order to obtain his toys, *us.* Would he really leave them in the hands of guys whose loyalties can't even be assured? On top of that, after passing through two kingdoms, he might have predicted it wouldn't be an easy task to make progress with so many bringing up the rear, so he'd probably send men he could trust…for example, a force under his direct control. Were my thoughts too simple?

"Shan't be long now," Niklas whispered.

"……"

Lifting up the cover, he squinted at the passing scenery.

"Finally, what I've been waiting for will start. I can say farewell to the life of being shamed behind my back for my poverty, of my family holding the title of earl in name only."

I saw evidence of neither guilt nor regret in the feverish light emanating from his eyes. Befitting the scene of a young man embracing the hope of a completely new life in his bright eyes; it was rather strange to behold.

"Fiend," Lutz muttered in a cold voice.

"What?"

Unfortunately, Niklas heard him. But even with the man glaring at him, Lutz did not flinch, and he looked back at the man with eyes cold enough to match his voice.

"You're inhuman."

"Hah. What are you trying to say? The fiend here would be you, wouldn't it? Lutz Eilenberg."

"And you as well. You're betraying everyone and throwing away everything you've had. Your homeland, your king, your family and friends. Without a shred of remorse, and no conscience to speak of. Such a person can no longer be called 'human,' can he?"

“……”

Silently, Niklas kicked Lutz in the shoulder.

“———!”

Lutz groaned in pain.

Emotionlessly, Niklas stepped on Lutz’s head.

“How ridiculous. You think they qualify to be called family and friends? They’re only the trash holding me back, the refuse who will not recognize my superiority. But…”

He ground the sole of his foot down with even more strength as he erupted in complaints. In the hollowed space of his eyes, his expression became increasingly erratic.

“…what were you saying? The one you should preach to about having nowhere he belongs is yourself, is he not?”

Pathetic, he said with a smile. *Does it hurt? You deserve praise for not backing down, but who was it that infuriated me?*

His hand came to rest on the sword hanging from his waist.
Niklas wouldn’t kill us, but this looked really bad. What do I do? How can I stop him?

I couldn’t afford to use magic. If I rammed my body into him, would that divert his attention to me?
I desperately tried to get up, and that’s when…

SCREECH!

The wagon shook violently, coming to a stop.
It seems like we’ve arrived at the delivery point.

“You’ve had a narrow escape,” Niklas said in annoyance, releasing his hand from his sword. Lifting the cover, he got out.
At the sight of his retreating back, my strength drained, and I let out a long sigh.

“Lutz. You need to cool down.”

“The ass was pissing me off…”

“How old are you?”

Lutz turned away, no intention of reflecting on his action. Stupid brat.

“Get out!”

Right after our conversation ended, fellows dressed completely in black climbed aboard and cursed at us, seemingly ready to drag us from the wagon. The area was still dimly lit, but daybreak must have been close by because the eastern sky was beginning to brighten. We must have been close to the foot of the mountains, for we were surrounded by trees, nary an unobstructed view. After I confirmed our surrounding, the fellows pushed us out from behind.

“So you’re here. My king has been expecting you.”

A powerful man was waiting.
He was a knight on a splendid warhorse, clad entirely in armor. There must have been ten of them.

Fitting of a kingdom better known for its thirst for war, everyone gathered looked very strong. However, their excellence doesn’t seem to have extended to their brains. They looked the type to mow down the opposition with force. Well, if their heads worked correctly, they wouldn’t have sworn loyalty to that nut of a king, right? The nation and those who made their livelihoods within it never looked back on their actions, only choosing to focus on expanding their territory when they should have immediately replaced such a foolish king.

“Come.”

With fellows standing on both sides, they grabbed me by the arms.
Lutz was similarly restrained.

In that second.

“Don’t move!”

A stern voice echoed through the area.

At the sound of that voice, those who had been hidden simultaneously came into view.
Soldiers with ready swords and bows surrounded the entire area. *Since when?!* and unsettlement spread throughout the soldiers of Sckellz.

“This is the dominion of our kingdom. You will not be forgiven for trespassing.”

“Absurd!! Why is the Kingdom of Vint…!!” Niklas sputtered in surprise, all color draining from his face.

Indeed, the banner raised by the surrounding soldiers did not belong to the Kingdom of Nayvel but its neighbor, the Kingdom of Vint.
Furthermore, these armored men were not frontier guards, but knights from the royal city’s own Order.

The man who was likely their commanding officer turned his sharp gaze on us, but spoke to the boy under his guard who was standing behind him.

“Your Highness, I deeply apologize for having involved you in this.”

“No. The one who unreasonably had you march out was me.”

The divine looks of the boy referred to as Highness looked like a painted angel come to life from a religious painting. With golden hair that looked like it had been spun out of sunlight, and blue eyes, from his looks alone, this boy and the princess were like two peas in a pod. The airs they gave off were completely different, however.
The blue of his eyes resembled the deep sea, and something terrible and unknown lurked at the bottom.

“You cannot overlook the actions of these insolent men who would dare trample on the dominion of other kingdoms. Mind me not, and please carry out your duties. It seems like the two boys are bound. Please take care of them.”

This young boy speaking with such unbelievable composure had left to study in the neighboring kingdom, the Second Prince of the Kingdom of Nayvel—Johan von Werfald.

“It can’t, this is…ridiculous,” Niklas said in dismay at the presence of a personage who should never have been in a place like this.
Eyes wide open in shock, a streak of sweat slid down the side of his face. The hand holding the hilt of his sword shook uncontrollably.

Niklas retreated with unsteady footsteps, and tripped over the root of a tree. Eyes gathered on the stumbling form, and Prince Johan narrowed his eyes at him in suspicion. Whatever he was thinking, he held his chin in his fingers and

seconds passed without a word.
And then, after blinking his eyes several times, he said, *Ahh.*

"Niklas."

"!!"

"Your Highness, do you know him…?"

"Niklas von Buelow. A Royal Knight from my kingdom… Niklas, why are you here?"

"……"

With those blue eyes that looked like they could see through everything zeroed in on him, Niklas gulped.
He was desperately searching for an excuse, but I wonder if he'd noticed yet?

That no matter what he did, he was already in checkmate.

How was a military exercise being conducted with such perfect timing, and to double the miracle, the Second Prince of Nayvel was even in the same camp? That out of all the routes he could have taken, for Niklas to expressly choose the route. That the knights of Vint had had time to conceal themselves at the location even before the soldiers from Sckellz arrived. It was like a miracle had been put together.
All according to plan.

Niklas had unknowingly played according to the script, manipulated by both the prince guarding his little sister inside the castle, *and* the prince who stood before him now.

"The coloring of those boys… They resemble the wizard children my brother wrote of in his letter."

"……"

"Why have you bound them? Why are you with our enemies? Answer me, *Niklas von Buelow!*"

Driven even more into a corner by His Highness's words, Niklas's shoulders shook with surprise.
Eyes burning with despair, he cast them down. Trembling like a child getting a

scolding, he bit on his lower lip.

"……up."

"So you've been reduced to turning traitor on your kingdom? You, the heir to an earl's family with proud heritage!" the prince said scornfully.

"Shut up!" Niklas yelled. "Shut up, shut up, *shut up!!*"

He shook his head once, as if to rid himsef of the Devil, and grabbed Lutz who stood beside him.

"!"

His sword came free with a wild swing, and he pressed the blade against Lutz's neck.

"Bastard!"

"Don't move! Unless you're fine with what may happen to this brat?" Niklas barked, his breathing rough.
Growling like a menacing dog, he glared at his surroundings.

"You come along as well!"

Imitating Niklas, the soldier from Sckellz roughly made a grab for my arm. He also pressed his sword against my neck, then pushed me in front of His Highness and the others.

"If you don't want to regret what happens to these guys, don't get any closer!"

What a typical villain's line.
I was so disgusted I couldn't help sighing, but I knew how serious the situation was so I kept my face blank. On the other hand, my pal couldn't sense the mood at all.

"You're so loud! You don't need to shout in my ears," he nonchalantly said as he covered his ears, face twisted in displeasure.
I couldn't supress a wry smile with Lutz so smoothly showing off his untied hands.

"You're…!"

"Aren't you kind of stupid? We're obviously no longer cut out to be made

hostages.”

Ay me! he sighed, theatrically shrugging his shoulders in an exaggeration of disappointment, and looking down at the ground.
He gave me one slow wink. Once his eye was open again, it had changed from its usual indigo to a silvery grey.

A hollow sound pierced the air as the sword was sent flying from Niklas.

“Wha—?!”

The moment Lutz powerfully stomped on the ground, something resembling a thick mist spread from under him, freezing the feet of Niklas and his group in an instant.

“How can you use…?! Wasn’t it suppressed?!”

“Oh, *this?”* Lutz asked, pointing at the thing fitted around his neck. Using a finger to release the clasp, it very easily came undone and fell to the ground. “As you can see, it’s a fake.”

He smiled innocently, but with the swipe of his hand countless ice shards materialized, swooping down on the fellows.

“Uwahhhh!!!”

Lutz looked like he was acting in a fit of violence to vent his anger. I gave him a single look, and sighed at length.

“Don’t wreak havoc first without me.”

With all my strength, I yanked the ropes apart, burning its remains with the flames I’d gathered in the palm of my hands.

“EEEEKK!”

The man holding me thrust me away from him in order to create some distance between us.

Refining the surrounding air, I let the flame I’d kindled spread. Looking at the blue flames flaring in my hands, the fellows screamed.

“Th-they’re…monsters…!!!”

Reacting to the words of the ashen and trembling men, Lutz and I looked at

each other at the same time.
Gazes cooling, we spat our responses at them.

“Monsters? Too late to realize that now.”

“These monsters were coveted, weren’t they? By *your* Master.”

The Wizards' Return.

The Wizards' Return.

※ The chapter continues in Theo Eilenberg's POV.

"I'm *so* tired," said Lutz.

"……"

The clip-clopping sound of the horse's hooves were very peaceful. Seated on his own horse next to me, Lutz continued to stare straight ahead with vacant eyes, like those of a dead fish. Looking up at the blue sky, I didn't respond. Neither of us really had the will for small talk.

When we were kidnapped, I was first discarded on the floor of the wagon, and then I went a bit overboard with the magic I wasn't used to handling yet. I was tense the entire time, so I'm worn out.
Moving even a single finger required work, and the moment my attention wandered, my eyelids began to shut.
At this junction, I wanted to sleep quicker, even if it was only by a little.

For now, our neighbors from Vind will be keeping the King of Sckellz's private force in custody. Any further trouble popping up from here on out belonged to our comrades; our roles ended here.
If Lutz and I had been been forcibly smuggled into the kingdom of Vind, I'm confident the two princes probably would have figured something to get us out.
After a mostly uneventful questioning, we were sent on our way.

The knights we were handed over to pointed out the frontier fortress the His Royal Highness seems to be lodged at, but we politely declined the offer to stay. We could do all the resting we wanted after going back.
At our response, the dedicated knights hesitated, but no one offered a protest after Lutz smilingly said, "It's the first time we've ever been without the chokers, so if we were to lose consciousness and somehow lose control…no, there's no question something *will* happen."

Even though he must have been even more exhausted than I was, Lutz seemed to share my sentiments.

Even if we're not much of a threat, it'll be a pain if we make it difficult for others to stay in the castle, so we should hold back, I said, feeling full of apprehension, and he readily agreed with an obedience that was unusual for him.

"I wanna," he said.

He'd barely stirred himself, so I'd begun to worry he'd fallen asleep on his horse.

What? I thought, turning to look at him. He continued to stare absently in front of him.

"Go back."

"……"

The whispered confession was ordinary.
But it was the first time such words had ever passed his lips.

When Lutz and I met at the orphanage it was summer and we were both seven years old.
My first impression was that he looked like a ghost.
With his nearly white silver hair and pale skin, he was so faint he seemed to disappear into the background with the garden's elderflowers. His delicate hands and feet had seemed out of place on a boy the same age as me.
The only thing unique about his image, the deep indigo color of his eyes, had been bereft of life, and he barely seemed alive.

How did you have to raise someone to create this pale imitation of the living?
I understood the answer as soon as it occurred of me to ask the question.

Lutz had always lived a life of concealment. With the exception of his parents, no one had known of his existence. Not the grandparents who lived far away, nor the people in his neighborhood.
How? I wondered. As a newborn baby, there was no way they could have known he had the makings of a wizard. But even then, there may have been no saving for Lutz. His outer appearance was normal, but signs of his abilities may have

already begun to manifest.

When a wizard used magic, the color of their eyes often changed. Mine changed from red to gold, and Lutz's changed from blue into silver.
You barely had any power as a baby, so though you might say magic, it was supposed to be so faint you could barely perceive it with your senses. Regardless, I suppose there could have been moments when the eyes might change color. Had his parents become aware of it, and decided to lock him away? Since they were dead now, I can only surmise how he lived until now.

When he was sent to the orphanage, Lutz never opened to anyone around him and ended up a loner.
Well, even if you talked to him he just ignored you, so he got what he deserved. I became the only one willing to go up to him.

My story was somewhat similar to his. The moment I was born, I was immediately abandoned in front of the orphanage. By the time we met, I'd been in the orphanage longer than the other children, and had become something akin to a surrogate big brother for the kiddos. I was fond of them, but I could never wholeheartedly think of them as family. Perhaps because vaguely suspected I was different.

The more I yearned for the future which had rejected me, the more it frightened, and from time to time, choked me.
Lutz continued to act indifferently to me, but only by his side did the pressure ease and I could breathe easier. The time I spent in his company increased.

Behind the orphanage, there was a small mountain. A giant tree had sprouted out there, and the base of it had become his favorite spot. As soon as he finished his daily tasks, that was where he went, and I followed him as I pleased, sleeping on the branches of the giant tree. That became our daily routine.
Lutz would read, and I would sleep. We barely conversed. Before the sun set, I'd say, *"Let's go back,"* and he never once replied.

I can say with confidence that the orphanage was probably not our home. Not for Lutz…and not for me, either.

10 years old. Winter.
I revealed the fact that I had magic to the Father.

Several years before, I slightly sensed an uncontrollable power inside myself. Magic easily influenced the roll of emotions, and in my case, I was easily overcome with “rage”.
One day, I was pulled aside by the Father. Uncomfortable with the idea of us hanging out together, the Father obliquely suggested I keep my distance from Lutz. He was the “problem child” who made no attempts to fit in. I was the “good child” everyone got along with.
I became irritated with the fancy speech he used to try and persuade me with.

You know nothing! I snarled, my body quickly bursting in flames.

When I saw how taken aback the Father was, a feeling of despair and resignation put me in check.

So I really am a monster, I thought.

It was only thanks to Lutz that I didn’t lose control then and there.
Noticing something amiss, the children began to gather, with Lutz at the forefront. He held his hands out to my burning body, and froze me in a clash of our powers.

“I’m the same type of monster he is,” he declared. I can never forget the look on the Father’s face. Fear and hopelessness. Contempt and pity. All the dark emotions boiling down in the same pot, and he looked at us with glazed eyes.

And yet, the Father insisted we were “good children”.
You’re good children, only strong in character. My important family, he said.

He normally smiled when he came in contact with us, but if we displayed even a hint of magic, he would berate us, saying it was evil. Magic was the power of the *Devil.* The way he looked at those times, I verily believed he terribly resembled the Devil he spoke of.

It came to a point where he no longer even became upset.

The Father willfully turned a blind eye to us.
He became desperate, and thought the problem would go away if he ignored it.

For our sake, he wasn’t mad. He cared about us, so he wasn’t avoiding our magic. He was *“the one who could not bring himself to accept the children”,* that was all.

Time flowed, and we turned thirteen.
Our existence had finally been exposed to the kingdom, and our warped play of family came to an end. The Father laid eyes on the knights who came to take us under their care, and even though his lips moved in protest, relief shone on his face. Our relationship, which continued to ignore the strains, had deteriorated to the point where reconciliation was no longer possible. Without need for the coercion, the end probably occurred right before our eyes.

We were taken to the royal palace, and that was where we met the princess, who was three years younger than us.
Her gently wavy platinum blonde hair fell down in long waves to her back, and long lashes framed big blue eyes the color of a clear sky. Even for someone like me who barely touched books, she was the very image of those vaguely depicted storybook characters called “princess” with both her fluffy loveliness and her dignified beauty.

However, contrary to her image of innocence, the princess who seemed to have been shaped with only beauty was sharp as a whip. While I’m at it, I’ll add she’s also rather strange.

At first, we believed she had been ordered by her older brother to acquaint herself and win us over, but we soon discovered how very honest she was—almost to a fault.
When we asked if she found us frightening, when she was told off for pitying us, she stood in front of us and answered that we *were* frightening, and that she *did* pity us.

With the words returned so frankly, their poison lost its effect.
We could also detect no falsehood in her words when she said she wanted to know us better. With nary a fragment of ill will to be found in her eyes, what choice did we have but to believe in her?

She was someone propriety would never have allowed us to approach, but the princess never lost interest and continued to talk to us.
She never got upset when Lutz rebuffed her, and little by little, she closed the gap between them. She brazenly said she’d feed him, but when she actually brought out handmade sweets, of course we found it surprising. There was never a single platter of sweets made by the her that had not been swept clean,

for what she made had been even more delicious than the concoctions cooked up by the chef.

No matter how cynical I was, when I was faced with someone who made so much effort to meet me halfway, I could no longer think it only a façade. Before I knew it, my heart had started to fill with the warmth she gave us.

That was plenty for me.
I would not ask the impossible, and wish that she accept us as wizards.

Even though I'd already made up my mind…

She had already accepted us for what we were, long ago. She never averted her eyes like the Father had, she very naturally accepted us, and most of all, she stayed by our sides.

As soon as I realized that, my shoulders sagged in relief.
I no longer needed to fear the things that rejected me. It wasn't necessary for me to turn my back on them and pretend not to see.
Anyhow, no matter how cool we tried to act now it would be pointless, because we were a stove and an icehouse. When I thought of that, I found the thought so strange, so amusing, I could not stop laughing.

I want to stay here, had been my thought.
With the princess, with Lutz, and myself. If I had that, there was nothing else I'd wish for. No matter what sort our relationship we had, I wouldn't complain. Family. Friends. Even if it was one between a master and her servant, I'd take it.

"Theo."

"Mm? You called?"

I'd been lost in recollections of the past.
From the way he kept looking at me in suspicion, it seems like he found my silence concerning.

"What made you suddenly go quiet?"

Your tummy aches? he added, and I stared at him in amazement.
The slightly amused words sounded indifferent, but I could tell from the look on his face he was truly worried. It was a response I never could have imagined from

the boy from the past.

“Wow, you’ve really become soft.”

“What! Someone worried about you, and that’s all you got to say? Are you making fun of me?” he said heatedly, looking at me in disbelief.

Not only had he mellowed out, his range of expressions had become more abundant.

“Nah, I’m touched.”

“If it’s a fight you want, just ask.”

“It’s all thanks to the princess.”

“!”

Lutz’s pale cheeks began to redden.
Lost for words, he turned his face away, trying to hide his blushing cheeks.

“You’re *stupid*.”

“Maybe,” I laughed with a light heart, and Lutz said no more.

After that, we rode in silence to the royal city.
Along the way, we napped when we could during riding breaks, but by the time we finally arrived, we were completely exhausted. Half-dead things barely summoning the will to move.

Weaving unsteadily on our feet, our destination was not our designated room, but the greenhouse we often frequented.
There’s no guarantee she’ll be there, what are you *thinking?* Even I was amazed with myself. But I wanted to see her at any cost, and I had a feeling I could meet her there.

“……”

I opened the door to the greenhouse.
A silhouette was visible on the other side of the green leaves. A fleeting glimpse had caught me a sight of shining, platinum hair. Her back was turned to us, so she didn’t notice us.
The guard knight standing next to her immediately reacted, snorting in

displeasure. I told myself not to get mad.

“Princess,” I called to her in a small voice.

The dreadfully hoarse sound that came out was unlike anything I’d ever thought could belong to me.

I feared it hadn’t reached her, but her shoulders shook as if she had heard.

“Princess.”

This time it was Lutz, like he was competing with me. That voice had the same husky, difficult to understand timbre.
But the princess turned around. Her clear blue eyes found us, opening wide.

They’re gonna fall out, I thought absently.

“……”

Her trembling lips slowly mimicked the shape of our names. But no sound came out.
She took a slow, teetering step. When her guard knight tried to offer his arm to support her, she waved him aside and gained control of herself, taking another step.

“Lutz.”

Finally hearing the voice he had been waiting for, Lutz seemed embarrassed for he responded curtly.

“What.”

“Theo.”

“Yes, princess?” I answered with undisguised delight, a smile stretching across my face.

“……”

Overwhelmed with surprise, her eyes gradually blurred. Instead of a voice, the sound of air seemed to fall from her lips, and her face twisted into a smile.

“Theo. Lutz.”

Calling our names once more, jewel-like drops of tears slipped down her

cheeks in rapid succession. One after another, they fell.
Without hiding her tear-stained face, the princess cried openly. She spoke, sobbing without restraint.

“Wel…welcome…ho…me…”

What I felt at that moment was great joy.
It was painful, occupying the entirety of my heart. The relief that came with getting what I’d always wanted was strong, and it was enough to tear me apart. There was nothing sad about it, so why was I assaulted by this desire to cry?
If I couldn’t help my own crooked smile when I saw hers, then doesn’t that mean I’ve been wrapped around her finger?

For without hardly a care to her appearance, she cried tears of happiness.

“We’re back.”

I’ve finally found it.

The place where I belong.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Apology.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Apology.

Sckellz’s plan to abduct the wizards ended in failure.
Becoming aware of their plot in advance, Nayvel beat them to the punch and gained the cooperation of their ally of Vint to successfully spring a trap on group of kidnappers and the King of Sckellz’s private force.

The Kingdom of Vint originally had nothing to do with the matter, but they could not close their eyes to trouble posed by the war-mongering Sckellz gaining a new weapon called *wizards*.
Skirmishes had risen between the two kingdoms on countless occasions before, so Vint could not write off as none of their concern. If Sckellz were to bare their fangs, which one of its surrounding kingdom would they turn it toward?

With the interests of Nayvel and Vint in alignment, they took this opportunity to declare war on Sckellz.
To the north of Sckellz there was the Kingdom of Balt as well as the Kingdom of Schnee. To the south, the Kingdom of Flamme. These kingdom would declare their intentions to support the allied forces of Nayvel and Vint.

With the sea to the west, Sckellz was now surrounded by enemies on all sides.
No matter how specialized they were in warfare, there was simply too much of a difference in numbers.
Furthermore, Nayvel and Lamme were both major powers endowed with twice the territory of Sckellz.
No matter how they fought back, Sckellz had no chance of winning.

However, the foolish king no doubt saw none of his kingdom’s dire straits.
His close aides advised him to surrender, but he refused. It seemed like he had grand ambition to embroil the entire continent in large-scale warfare.

By the hands of his own Order, the King of Sckellz was assassinated.
It was a coup d’état.

Sckellz declared its surrender the very same day, and the conflict that had spread over half the continent was over.

However, even though we managed to avoid a large-scale war, it did not mean the chaos in our own kingdom had calmed down.
Niklas has been imprisoned, and if a lengthy investigation were to be a conducted, I wondered if he'd receive a sentence that could be executed. Of course, Hilde was also subject to punishment, but because there was room to take the extenuating circumstances into consideration, I believe her sentence will be much lighter than his.

I, Rosemarie von Werfald, could do nothing to influence politics. Secluded inside the palace with my guard knight glued to me, the only recourse I had left was to wait for the current state of affairs to calm down.

I could finally feel peace returning by the time half a year had passed since Lutz and Theo were abducted.
My ever occupied older brother stopped by to see me, and I thought, *Ahh, it's finally over.*

"What…is this?"

Sweets making…*ahem.* My older brother came around right as we finished up with magic training, and I was serving what we'd made for tea.
The pastries our kingdom was familiar with were all baked sweets. The cream-shaped object I held out to him was the first of its kind he had ever laid eyes on, and yet he put it in his mouth without hesitation.
Christof was indeed my older brother, but at the same time he was also the first in line for the throne. I voiced my concerns about tasting it first for traces of poison, but my brother declined.

He put the scoop he'd taken with a silver spoon into his mouth, and turned to stone.
A rare flash of emotion flickered over his expressionless face, his shock apparent to see. This was the point we returned to his question from above.

After gulping it down, my brother stared fixedly at what I'd served him in the shallow plate, then he looked at me.

"Frozen sweets."

Yup, Lutz and I made vanilla ice cream. I couldn't get my hands on vanilla beans though, so I'm not sure if it was really okay to call it vanilla flavored. Once I'd gathered the ingredients I needed, I could only think, *Let's try it* and dove into the process of making it. It was a tough battle. Magic was quite difficult to fine tune. If it was too cold everything froze over, and the moisture in the air began combine, splitting the air with the sound of ice breaking.*

Theo had less power than Lutz, but he was adept at control and was quick to succeed. I remembered Lutz growling in frustration as he looked at the light-brown color of the baked sweets Theo had produced.
Like he desperately trying not to lose out, I thought Lutz improved considerably at quite a fast pace. These two truly made a good combo.

Like this and that, one way or another, the ice cream was made. Personally, I thought it tasted delicious, but… I wonder if it wasn't to my brother's taste?

"Is it not to your liking?"

"No, it's good. This is merely the first time I've ever tasted this texture and flavor."

Scooping out another spoon, he put it in his mouth. It was only a little, but I saw his eyes narrow, and I was relieved.
It was an expression that said, *Yes, this is truly delicious.* Great.

At any rate, Nayvel does have frozen sweets.
They froze fruit juice inside an ice house…in other words, something like sorbet. It was the same frozen sweet, but sorbet and ice cream were completely different, so I was a little worried how he'd receive it, but I'm glad it turned out fine.

"I heard it was made using magic, but this is truly astonishing."

"Yes. The two of them possess magnificent powers."

It wasn't my achievment, but I was happy to hear his praise.

They were words I also wanted the two of them to hear, but Lutz and Theo had been called away from their seats by Lady Irene.

“I’ve heard it was your idea to put magic to practical use, but…”

Maybe treating two genius wizards as cookwares may have been in poor-taste after all? Preparing myself for a lecture, I asked, “It was. I thought it would help to control their powers, so I proposed the idea to Lady Irene, but…should I have not?”

“Not at all.”

My brother shook his head, eyes closed.

“If our ruler and everyone else in this kingdom were like you, the world would surely become more peaceful.”

“……”

Erhmmm. What was he talking about?
Was he praising me, or was he disgusted with me? No…as far as I could tell, he was praising me, and thinking very highly of me.
Something warm got in my eyes.

“Leonhard, why don’t you try it as well?”

“!”

My brother addressed the knight standing guard behind him, but the knight smiled wryly and declined with a very proper excuse.

“I am in the middle of my duties.”

I thought it was a bit of a shame, but instead of becoming disappointed, my good opinion of him increased. I was probably the only one who thinks it cool for a man to be so devoted to his work.

After some more pleasant conversation, my brother stood up from his seat. He intended to return to work, so I got up to send him off, hesitating a little. The truth was, I’d wanted an opportunity to chat with Sir Leonhard, but…I knew his professional duties were of utmost importance to him, and I didn’t want to detain him back with my personal problems.

Like my older brother, Sir Leonhard was a very busy, so if I lost this opportunity, who knew when we would next meet. But I also didn't want to hinder his work.

Losing courage, I told them to come back for another visit, waving goodbye like a good child. For some reason, a considering look came across his face as he looked me.

"Rosé," he said.

"Yes?"

"Do you mind if I borrow Klaus for a bit?"

Huh? What for?
I wasn't the only surprised at his words. Klaus was also startled to have his name suddenly called out, and even Sir Leonhard couldn't hide his bewilderment
What in the world are you thinking, *brother?*

"Who will guard Her Highness?"

"I just want to have a little talk. As soon as I get to the office, I'll be right back. Until then, I want *you* to take care of Rosé."

Sir Leonhard was only lost for a second.

"By your will."

His confusion cleared, and he nodded. A big difference from my own nervous self.

"Rosé, are you OK with that?"

"Of course…"

I'd hesitated to bring it up myself, but I nodded assent.
Even if I didn't know the reason why he was asking, this was what I'd wished for in the end. If this was my only chance to speak with Sir Leonhard, then I won't let it slip from my hand.

Klaus seemed very unwilling, but he couldn't go against the His Royal Highness, so he reluctantly left with Chris.

The Reincarnated Princess's Apology. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Apology. (2)

After Christof and Klaus left, silence descended in the room.

What was I going to do…? My heart was ready to beat right out of my chest. But this was different from the usual mix of nerves. It was the tension you felt when it finally came time to apologize to a friend you'd just had a fight with. No. Sir Leonhard wasn't a friend, and it wasn't like we'd had a fight, either. But it was as unpleasant as being placed in that position.

Calm down, calm down, I was telling myself, when he called my attention.

"Your Royal Highness."

"Ye-…yes!" I replied in an extremely surprised voice, the opposite of what I'd wanted.
I was simply mortified.

Sir Leonhard looked at me without batting an eye, completely serious.

"I am only forbidden from eating while on duty. I am reluctant to ask, but… may I speak with you?"

"What about…?"

I never expected Sir Leonhard to break the ice first.
Unintentionally, my posture and expression went stiff. My palms were covered in sweat, and my pulse slowly picked up even more speed.

It had been my intention to apologize all along, so even if I was in for a reprimand, it didn't matter. The order of things merely changed around. Right, that was it.
You don't know whether it's for better or worse, I reasoned with myself, trying to regain my peace of mind.

He stared at me fixedly as I freaked out, then bowed his head for some reason. Taken by no small amount of surprise, my voiced failed me.

“My deepest apologies.”

“……?”

“It has always been my wish to convey my apologies to Your Royal Highness once more. However, there was never an opportunity to meet, and it has been long delayed.”

Why was he the one apologizing?
I was thrown off course at this unlikely turn of events.

“Please raise your head. Sir Olsein, I never expect to receive an apologies or anything of the like from you. None at all,” I told him impatiently, and he did as I ordered.

He’d probably sensed my discomfort.

“The apology should be coming from me. Half a year ago, with nothing but my own judgment I acted by my own authority, and caused great trouble for everyone in the Order. Under normal circumstances, I should have consulted with you or Klaus the moment I had perceived wrongdoings afoot. Please accept my sincerest apology. I know I thought too highly of myself, misguidedly believing that there was something I could do.”

I hung my head down in shame and regret.

“Your Royal Highness,” Sir Leonhard said.

When I looked at him, I could see myself reflected in his sincere eyes. Eyebrows lowered sadly, he slowly shook his head.

“Please do not judge yourself so harshly.”

“But…”

“Your judgments were not wrong. If you had done nothing, Hilde Kramer could not have been saved. If you must condemn someone, then this one is to blame. You were hurting, but without even thought spared for your sake, I only told you to endure your anguish…I should never have said those words.”

I am truly sorry, he said, deep regret affecting the sound of his voice.
I was at a loss for words.

The moment Hilde was in danger of losing her life, I'd completely lost it. It was only thanks to his directions that I'd managed regain my composure, so I it had never crossed my mind to blame him.

Yes, that was really how I felt about it.
But, perhaps. There may have been something lodged in my heart, and the reason I couldn't immediately deny it was surely because—to some degree—I'd been hurt. I couldn't bring myself understand.
I'd been been blind to my own shortcomings.

"The fact that you would not bring yourself to rely on me nor Klaus was very frustrating. 'Why must you be so obstinate, insisting on carrying on by yourself?' There were also times I wondered to myself in impatience. However, at one point, I realized why. It is not a matter of you refusing to rely on others, but that you *cannot* bring to do so."

"What..?"

I blinked. I stared at him blankly, a step behind in comprehension.
For a moment, I thought I'd heard wrong. I must have been hearing things.
But it proved to be no illusion when he knelt before me and picked up my hand.
From below, his dark eyes without a hint of shadow pinned me down, and my heart shook.

"I wished to one day convey to you my wish for you to depend on those around you. At the time, I thought perhaps you disliked relying on others because of your sense of royal duty, of your obligations. But there was more. I felt your pain."

"……"

"You look down when you have something want to say, and that has not been the only stubbornness I have observed. To make no further mention of that, though, someone who thought too highly of herself would not be able hold herself back in such a manner."

He paused, peering at me. The girl reflected in his eyes looked extremely pitiful. She had an insecure look on her face, dismay mixed with relief. She looked like a child who had been lost, and had finally found her way home.

The strong palm was slowly covering up my hand.

"When you are alone, what do you… Do you not carry a great burden inside?"

"……"

I couldn't react right away.
I knew I should have immediately denied all his guesswork. I should have said, *Whatever do you mean?* and followed it with a laugh.
The hand he held shook. My voice was stuck.
Far from doing all the things I should, I put up with my desire to burst into tears because it was all too much.

I've been so anxious this whole time.
I had no way of knowing whether the path I'm moving down is right or not. The only thing that shows me where the road may lead are the memories that grow ever more faint with time.
Even if I wanted to confide in someone, there was no one. I could only keep telling myself it would be okay.
Even while I hold the hand of the person dear to me, the one who asked me to open up to those around me, I can only think of flags weighing on my mind. I've been enslaved to this unreasonable notion that I must do everything on my own, by myself.

Now I knew a little more.

When I tried to protect everyone, I was protected in return, wasn't I? I refused their helping hands, turning my back on their kindness.
I didn't know my own abilities either, a truly hopeless child.

And yet, he still watched over me. He stilled worried about me.
Many times over he held out a kind hand to the charmless child even though she rejected it, asking her to rely on him.

"If you do not wish to speak of it, you need not force yourself to share. However, if you ever feel that which you hold inside is too painful…then please share your burden. I, too, hope you will allow me to protect that which you desire to safeguard."

"……"

There was a painful pressure on my chest.
Moved by a sudden impulse, I flew into the kneeling Sir Leonhard's arms.

"…Sir Leonhard…"

For a moment he held his breath in surprise, but he didn't tear me off.
His big hands patted my back, trying to calm me down. They moved a little awkwardly, like he didn't know how to use his hands, but they were gentle. It was a gesture that spoke of handling something fragile, surely so that I would not become frightened.

Each time I feel his concern and kindness, I think…

I love this person.

Love, love, *love.*

Not the character from inside the game, the Commander of the Royal Knights from "UraSeka".
Once again, I've fallen in love with this person…with Sir Leonhard von Olsein.

The Reincarnated Princess's Discussion.

The Reincarnated Princess's Discussion.

"……"

Wha-what should I do…?

Some ten-odd minutes have passed since I hugged Sir Leonhard.
Now that I've just come back to my senses and realized what sort of situation I'm stuck in, and how shameless I've been, I'm breaking out in a dripping cold sweat.

I couldn't hold back my emotions and hugged him, but was that okay or not okay? Which was it?
Depending on the situation and the perspective, would I be charged with the crime of a groper for jumping on another person without their consent? No, if I considered the difference in our statuses, it probably *was* sexual harassment…

I wasn't flat out rejected, so I decided it was probably within the bounds of what was acceptable, but I was being quick to jump to conclusions. Even if he was reluctant, the princess couldn't just be pushed away, could she?

If I can think that far ahead, then I need to let go immediately. That was my thought, but I couldn't find the right moment to break away. Now? Maybe now?! Someone, please do a countdown! From three…no, my heart needs to prepare itself, so from ten, please.

"Your Royal Highness…?"

"Eeee—!"

I'd been trying to sort the chaotic activity in my head, begging an imaginary friend for a favor when Sir Leonhard's soft whisper brought me crashing down to reality.
Shocked out of my reverie, I made a weird sound and jumped back.

Witness to my eccentric behavior, Sir Leonhard stared at me in amazement.

Ugh, even if I say it myself, I did think my sudden movement quite resembled those of a frog. I wanted to die.

I knew heat was slowly but steadily gathering in my face. Would I become as red as a tomato?
I hadn't wanted to display any more disgraceful behavior, but it had been out of my control.

Sir Leonhard blinked several times from what he'd seen, and then a laugh coughed out of him.
Unintentionally, it seems, and I could feel no malice in his laughter.
But it was still *embarrassing*. He noticed I'd begun to tear up, so he covered his mouth his his right hand and cleared his throat.

"Begging pardon…"

Ugh. Someone, please bury me deep…

"I'm sorry, too. On top of losing my composure, I hugged you as well. I really sorry for all the trouble I've caused, Sir Olsein."

Resisting my desire to run away in shame, I hung my head.

"Please, do not call yourself a bother. Personally, I want you to rely on me more."

"So you did not…find it disagreeable?"

"Most certainly not," he said, nodding.

Encouraged by his positive response, I tried asking about what had been troubling me the most, and he swept away my worries without pause as soon as I posed the question to him.

I'm so glad.
It didn't seem like he didn't dislike it, so I sighed in relief.

"However…Your Royal Highness?"

"Uhm…what is it?"

Although I felt a moment's relief, I was dismayed to find him sending a meaningful glance at me.

Huh? Maybe it wasn't okay after all? And it became sexual harassment?

My expression froze, but Sir Leonhard smiled like he was having fun, eyes like those of a child up to no good.

"Perhaps, princess, it is time you called me Leon."

"!!"

I was reminded of all the times I'd behaved in a shameless behavior.
My heavens, I'd done it again, hadn't I?

"T-that is…umm, well…"

Right away, voice was given to my longing; desire made itself apparent on my face. In my mind, I've always called him that.
I needed dodge the question somehow, but all the ideas that came to mind were completely useless. I'd be more likely to come up with a full confession of my wickedness than an excuse.

Whatever the case, I can't recover my image. Coming to my conclusion, I gulped and took a deep breath.

"May I…call you that?" I asked timidly, covertly looking at him. I waited for his answer, trying to keep the pressure of my heart beating from the jitters under control.
Anyhow, if I couldn't worm my way out, then I decided I might as well savor the opportunity. I mean, only my older brother has been invited to call him that, it wasn't fair! I want to call him that, too.

"Certainly," he said, smiling at me.

"Th…thank very much…!"

Wooooohooooo!! Even though I pumped my fists inwardly, I was careful to not show any change outwardly. Not only was my demeanor unbefitting of a princess, but I was also weak to his charms.

"It is a small matter you need not thank me for."

His eyes smiled as he looked at me, like he saw something pleasing to the eye—an animal or a child, perhaps.
Seems like my true character has not been revealed.

“Then…Sir Leon.”

I tested his name again. My voice wavered slightly from nerves.
I wanted to chat casually with him forever, but time was limited. Christof was keeping Klaus away, so I needed to take my chances *now.*

“Will you listen to my story?”

Sir Leon’s eyes opened wide, and he wiped the smile off his face.

“Yes,” he said, nodding.

His low voice and solemn expression made me nervous.

I gathered my resolve, and began to tell him my story.

“When I was still very young, I had a dream.”

“A…dream?”

I nodded.

“It was the typical dream, of a not very much changed reality. With familiar scenes, and familiar figures…but, I was filled with slight sense of unease. The people I kept seeing were slightly older.”

Sir Leonhard’s breath caught, and he whispered in a hoarse voice, “Visions of the future…”

“It was nothing so grand. I don’t believe I’ve been gifted with a divine power. However, the dreams I had for that short period of time only were different somehow… And I couldn’t find evidence to otherwise prove I made too much out of nothing.”

There was certainly reluctance to lie on my part.
However, to divulge the entire truth would have been too big of a risk.

I have no idea if he’d believe me if I told him I’d been reincarnated with memories from my past life, but leaving that aside, what was even more difficult to explain was probably the fact we were inside the world of a game.

In a world without even a single TV, I didn’t think I’d be able to make sense of those things called “video games”. It was something I should never attempt to do in the first place.

If he learned the world he was living in had been artificially created, then he was bound to be shocked no matter how strong of a character he had. Besides, there was still no proof that this world was the same as the one from “Welcome to the Reverse World”. It could be a very similar parallel universe, for all I know.

Right now, what was important wasn’t me failing to disclose everything. I’m bringing Sir Leonhard into my confidence, giving him what knowledge I posses, to avoid the events that will happen in the future.

So that Sir Leonhard will become my ally.

The Reincarnated Princess's Discussion. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Discussion. (2)

"……"

Sir Leonhard sank into silence with a troubled expression on his face after my simple explanation.
I had no way of guessing whether he would believe in me or not. Before we can even get there, it was a mystery if I'd sufficiently conveyed everything with my limited words.

I wanted to keep my lies to the bare minimum, so I only said I'd seen it in a "dream".

"Your Royal Highness," Sir Leonhard finally spoke after an elapsed silence.

"Yes?"

"To summarize, you have knowledge of a future that may occur, but not of everything. This knowledge is limited to the people around you, and only within a certain time frame, so there are still a lot of unclear portions, and many things you have no knowledge of. You cannot predict when these many events you will happen. But your current actions have shown there is a possibility the future can be rewritten. Have I gotten everything correct?"

"Yes…"

It must have been an unbelievable story to told to.
Although the story I'd given, I was shocked. If my friend had suddenly told me something like that when I was still alive in Japan, it would've been very hard for me to accept it immediately.

However, from Sir Leonhard's reaction, there was nothing to indicate him being lost. On the other hand, *I* became bewildered.

He folded his arms and rested his chin in his hand. He looked down, like he was deep in thought, and said *I see* in a faint tone.

“You knew the future. In order to divert the misfortune occurring to the people around you, you were forced to move on your own. You only had yourself and Klaus to rely on, and it would have been difficult to decide how much it you could permissibly explain. In addition, the disparity between the future you knew and…”

“Wai-wait a minute!”

Uninterested in listening to him continue, I interrupted him. The eyes he’d narrowed in thought rounded as he stared at me.

“…what is it?”

“My story, you believe it?”

I was self-conscious of the absurd story I’d told him.
Furthermore, I was a 10-year-old child. Even if he was putting a little girl’s wild tale in order, I thought it couldn’t be helped.

“I do.”

And yet, Sir Leonhard declared that without a hint of hesitation.

“…why?”

“Well. There are several reasons, but the incident that happened half a year ago stands out as the best example. The plot to kidnap the wizards Lutz Eilenburg and Theo Eilenberg had been a confidential matter, limited to handful of knights within the order. The likelihood of someone leaking that information was not out of the question, but your knowledge in that situation was unfathomable. Because you acted even faster than we could.”

“Huh?”

“You had Klaus investigate Hilde Kramer, did you not? Around that time, we had suspected Niklas was a spy, but had not yet become aware of Hilde Kramer’s existence.”

I see.
I’d suspected Hilde Kramer, and barely managed to connect her to Niklas. However, to Sir Leonhard and the others, Niklas had led them to Hilde. It was the reverse.

Even if they'd obtained information, and could follow up on that lead, it was impossible to trace it.

"Furthermore, I cannot believe you to be someone who would ever lie."

"!"

At his words, my conscience was run through with a knife.
It was not without reason, but, the lie was being told. No matter what the reason, I couldn't change the fact that I was deceiving him.
My heart was in stabbing pain. It made me want to apologize immediately.

Instead, I chewed on my lips and endured.
This was how I was going to proceed from now on. There was no going back.

"Thank you…very much."

For that reason, I smiled as I thanked him. I *had to* say it.

"……"

Sir Leonhard held quiet, smiling bitterly. His expression was conflicted, but he still looked at me warmly.
Perhaps he'd noticed. That there was no way I'd explained everything, and everything had not been the truth.

Even then, Sir Leonhard did seem like he would press me for answers despite my fake smile.

"Your Royal Highness."

"Yes?"

"If it does not hinder you, then I would like to ask, will there be an event that must be avoided at all cost in the near future?"

The first thing that came to mind was, of course, "The Dark Lord's Revival".
If I wished to live in peace, it was a flag that I must absolutely break down. But it was still not the right time to destroy that flag.

"There is still some time before that happens, but right now there is something I must do without delay."

"Well, then. Is there anything I can do to assist you?"

“!……Yes!”

This was exactly what I’d been hoping would happen.
I controlled my expression, and nodded strongly.

“But this conversation…has taken much longer than I expected.”

“That is true. Klaus should be returning any moment now. That man is not someone who can ‘wait’ if you tell him.”

Especially when it comes to you, Sir Leonhard said, laughing.

“I would like to arrange a time to meet with you again before long. May I speak with you when that time comes?”

“Of course.”

I sighed deeply in relief. As if I’d had to continuously had to brace myself until now, I loosened the hands I’d been unconsciously holding in fists. In the next second.

———*BANG BANG.*

“!”

Like it had been perfectly timed, knocks came from the door.

It was the capable yet bothersome, “cannot ‘wait’ if you tell him to wait” man, Klaus. My guard knight had returned roughly about five seconds after I promised to meet with Sir Leonhard next time.

His timing had been too good to be true. When I froze, Sir Leonhard smiled wryly.

“You are safe, he did not hear,” he said in a quiet voice as he walked past me to the door.
On the other side of the open door, sweat dotted on the forehead of the heavily panting man. It did seem like there was no cause for concern, so once again I sighed deeply.

The Reincarnated Princess's Encounter.

The Reincarnated Princess's Encounter.

In bygone days, the world was on the verge of destruction because of the Dark Lord.

Evil spread, and the hearts of the people were colored with fear and despair. Darkness began to cover the world.
That is a tale of olden days, now several hundred years in the past. When the Dark Lord was sealed, the Dark Ones disappeared as well. The people who lived through those chaotic times are long gone, and the entity known as the Dark Lord has been turned into a nursery tale.
Magic's significance as the first line of defense against the dark creatures has been lost—much like how the Dark Lord was gradually forgotten by the people.

However, that does not mean he has disappeared.

In light exists shadow, and in life exists death; all went together, like two sides of the same coin. They were not things that could be separated from the other, and one by itself can never be completely whole.
The hearts of humans were the same. Love existed with hate, hope with despair, and only powers that were the same possessed the ability to draw close to each other.

Existing alongside the prayers of the people, the Dark Lord will never be completely erased.
In one of the great number of temples standing in Nebel*, he still lies in quiet repose.

If this world followed the same path as the one in the game, in the not far future he will be stirred awake.

The one who will be most deeply affected by the Dark Lord's revival was the Priest, Michael von Diebold.
He was not born the Dark Lord.

Michael had been a very ordinary boy, the second son to a viscount.

As the son of a noble, he had known no discomfort his entire life, but he threw away his social status and decided to follow the path of serving God.
He became the priest of a great temple in the royal city.

Had peace continued endlessly, Michael would never have become involved with the Dark Lord. He may have lived in peace his entire life, offering prayers to God. When he was thirteen, however, the Kingdom of Nebel began to experience much troubled times.

A war broke out between Vind and Sckellz. With a standing alliance between Nebel and its neighbors in Vind, the kingdom eventually became involved in war. The conflict stretched over a year without cessation and the five kingdoms on the western half of the continent were dragged in. It was a difficult situation no one could not extricate themselves from.
In the year after, a neighboring kingdom to the northwest took advantage of the opportunity exhaustion had created in the kingdom due to the prolonged war. The Kingdom of Laptah invaded the Kingdom of Nebel and a new war began.
To add to the distress, disease began to spread from the southern regions of the kingdom.

A kindhearted boy, Michael worried about the devastation of the land and the suffering of the people.
Though he might wish otherwise he possessed no special powers, but that did not prevent him from deciding there must be something he could do. He rushed out of the great temple, determined to visit the entire country.

Tending to the wounded and the sick, helping the children, and offering prayers for the deceased, Michael traveled throughout the ruined kingdom tirelessly.

Finally, he arrived at a remote village near the battle fields.
Light rain began to fall around early evening, the many inhabitants of the village ran for cover. Left without shelter, Michael had no choice but to spend the night in a nearby shrine.
Inside the ancient and crumbling building, he searched for a spot to weather the rain.

Moving deeper and deeper inside, he found a hidden door by chance, and inside of that narrow room was an altar. Enshrined there was a single stone, the size of a fist.
While he found it uncanny, he would only have spend a single night in a nook of the room, so he decided to rest.

Unfortunately, that very night the old shrine was caught between the fighting and it was destroyed.
Michael was crushed beneath the debris, and he died.

The stone on the altar was destroyed in the very same instant, the Dark Lord who had been sealed took possession of Michael's body and successfully revived himself.

…with more information to go on, I thought I could understand the great number of things I must do, and the huge disparity between the game and reality.
To be honest, I was having trouble sorting out my thoughts. I'd wanted to write everything on paper, and meet with everyone. But, well, I can't do either for many reasons.
Leaving anything behind on a piece of paper posed too much of a risk, and having a meeting was impossible for now because the only adviser I had—Sir Leonhard—was kept busy because of his work.

Speaking of the things I could do, I've been making a list of them one by one inside my head.
Honestly, it was overloaded long ago…

Eyes focused far away, I stared outside the window with a sense of escape.
Was the reason why I felt so much irritation with the loveliness of the clear blue sky because my own heart was not pure?

"……"

I sighed deeply.
I lightly slapped my cheeks twice, and got up from my seat.

"Princess Rosemarie, where are you headed?"

"The library."

There were some books I would need.
Briefly informing him of my destination, I began to walk there. I went to the library with my troublesome guard knight, the usual face that followed me everywhere.

"Hmmm."

In the big, unpopulated library, I surveyed the bookshelves and groaned a little. Which one should I start from?

My objectives were mostly separated into three parts.
First, war evasion. Second, defenses against the spread of disease. And lastly, how to prevent the Dark Lord's revival.
They sound like completely different problems, but they were in fact all linked together.

In order to check where I'm going, I'll first need a map.

The sound of of my footsteps were followed by the sound of another pair of feet, like nothing was out of the usual.
I instinctively killed the sigh that was about to fall out, and turned around. I looked up at the face of the handsome man who stood even taller than one or two heads above me.

"Klaus. You will wait for me by the entrance."

"Why must I? I am your guard. If I am not near at hand, I cannot accomplish my duties."

No, no, no!
You made it sound like it was extremely reasonable, but I've never seen another guard with a complete lack of regard for personal distance like you. Your assigned charge has a thing called *privacy,* more or less.
Don't have so many mental breakdowns, I've been driven to telling myself in pity, and that's because your sense of personal space is so messed up.

"I asked you to wait by the entrance. If something happens, I'll call you immediately."

“I cannot assent.”

“……”

Son of a *bitch.*

Without a moment of hesitation he asserted *NO,* and with the anger I suddenly remembered my own impending crisis.
I’ll be turning eleven years old soon. I was rushing into the years society called the most difficult for a child. Getting stuck with a male guard around the clock was bound to have its own unpleasantries.
Besides, it was different when it was me with the contents of a woman with twenty plus years inside, but the Priestess might not be able to endure this lack of distance.

In the future, Klaus will become her guard, not mine.

As long as you didn’t flip his switch, it wasn’t so bad when it was the gentlemanly Klaus from the game, but the thought of handing over the current Klaus made me feel really guilty.

From now on, for my sake, and eventually the Priestess’s as well…
I must teach this man how to “wait”!

“Klaus.”

“Yes.”

“Kneel.”

“Certainly.!” Klaus said in a low voice, his breath taken away.
But he immediately regained his composure, bending his knee with clean efficiency that wasted no energy. The height of his eyes was a little below mine. Far from being malicious, I was simply curious whether his position on the floor would make him lose some dignity.

But Klaus was blushing from some nervousness or another.
Even if he was not particularly frightened, I had no intention of physically punishing him.

“Your master is His Majesty the King, the one who said that was me. However, you are not allowed to ignore my words.”

“I have never, in any way…”

“Be quiet, and listen!”

“Yes, m’lady.”

“If I ever make an unreasonable order, I won’t mind if you reject it regardless of your position. However, *unless* I otherwise say so, *unless* it is a situation where you absolutely cannot agree to my demands, then you are obligated to obey me,” I said, choosing overbearing words on purpose.
I don’t even need to say I didn’t want to order him around. If I think about the hereafter, he’ll be absolutely unbearable if he remained like this.
There were things I needed to do. When I thought of about them, this inconvenience had to be resolved right now.

“I am a princess, and you are a male guard. From now on, you won’t always be able to stay by my side. Well, there should be a lot of places you can’t go together with me. When that happens, what will you do? If I am not within reach of your sword, will you give up?”

“No,” Klaus immediately answered. Expression resolute and voice ringing with dignity, he declared, “I will never abandon hope when it comes to your protection. Upon my pride as a knight, and my life, this I swear.”

Like a knight in shining armor girls dreamed of, he was gallant and handsome, and I——pulled back.
I never you asked you to go that far!

“If what you say is true, then learn how to protect me even if we’re separated.”

Schooling the facial muscles that had begun to twitch, I managed to keep myself serene. I’d exerted great effort to appear as calm as possible.

“Don’t just stare at me. If you sense something out of place, try to pay attention the movements the people in the surrounding. Observe their words, any odd behavior, and various other details. You are not only guarding me; do your best to take action while keeping the time, place, and situation all in mind. If it’s you, then you should be able to do it.”

And my privacy will also be protected, I desperately wished.

“Princess Rosemarie,” said Klaus with deep feeling.
His palm pressed against his heart, like he was trying to keep the lid on his powerful emotions to stay shut. His dark green eyes scrunched up in pain as he looked at me.

“……”

Right then, I felt a chill go down my back.

Seeing me shiver from the dark atmosphere, Klaus bowed his head.

“By your will,” he said tersely.

For some reason, those briefs words stayed in my ears for a long time.

I had a bad hunch. Very.
There was a saying that sometimes you must lose a battle to win the war, but I couldn’t help feeling I’d done the complete opposite. Like I may have destroyed something I’d been protecting for a long time in order to fix this urgent matter.

But it was already too late to go back.

“Well, then, Klaus, wait for me here.”

“Certainly.”

While bearing a headache from the man who seemed to be obeying with complete delight, I began to walk around looking for books.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Encounter. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Encounter. (2)

The hard sound of my footsteps resounded throughout the not very wide room.
This was one of the libraries in the palace, but it was more like an extension. The total volume of books kept here weren’t that many.
But, there were a lot of valuable books that the main building inside the palace grounds did not have. On top of that, only those who had permission were allowed to access, so I didn’t need to worry about being observed.

Between the shelves and the stairs, there were a lot of blind spots so Klaus must be out of his mind with worry, but security was tight so it would be difficult for suspicious persons to sneak in.
The dimensions of the windows weren’t big enough for people to use it as an entry point, either.

Safe, and most importantly, quiet. As a place of concentration, it was a great spot.

I stopped in front of a shelf and took a book. It was quite old, but maintenance must have been on point because there was no smell of mold.

I went up the short stairs, advancing inside. Now carrying two volumes in my arms, I ventured even deeper inside.
An atlas, a medical journal, and lastly…

“……?”

I heard the sound of a small clatter.
The only thing in front of my eyes were bookshelves, so I turned in the direction of that sound. A small window had been placed at the end of the wall to prevent damage to the books.
In front of it stood a single man.

“!”

I hadn't noticed his presence, so I instinctively took a step back in fright. However, without sending a single glance at me, the man quietly turned a page in the book.
He was…*not* a brazen intruder. With his face in profile, he looked very familiar.

Platinum blond hair I had originally mistaken for white at first shone from the narrow light streaming in. Different from my curls, fine hair without its own tendencies cast a shadow on a beautiful forehead.
His eyes, framed by long lashes, were the color of a bright winter sky. In profile, from the clean bridge of his nose to his thin lips, his facial features were very well put together but lacked any fragment of emotion.

"Are you also here to read?" he asked, not even bothering to look at me.

"……"

Even though it wasn't a reproach, I was choked for an instant.

"Why are *you* here…"

Without answering him, I asked him a question in return. My voice worked itself out of my throat, but although it wasn't hoarse, it was quite stiff.

"……"

After several seconds had passed, he closed the book.
Even if it hadn't been a very loud, my shoulders tensed nervously from the sound. He slowly raised his face to look at me. His light-colored eyes reflected my image.

"Is it strange for me to be inside my own palace?"

Even the motion of lightly tilting his head to the side seemed like it had come straight out of a painting. Though he was in his mid-30s, there was nary a blemish nor a wrinkle on his face.
Receiving a hard stare from this man whose good looks seemed like it couldn't possibly be real made me want to run away screaming, but I dug in my heels and shook my head.

"No, father."

"I see."

The name of the man who stood before me was Randolf von Werfald.
His Majesty the King, the current ruler of Nebel. My father.

I called him my father, but there was practically no connection between us as parent and child.
We didn't have a relationship where I could freely meet with him, and I'd never felt any affection, either. More than anything else, I found this person difficult to deal with.

It wasn't like I had no questions about the head of the state wandering around in a place like without a single companion, but quite frankly, I didn't want to get involved.

Let's find what I came here for and leave without delay.
I made up my mind to concentrate on finding the books as I'd originally planned.

…*but.*

"……"

What I was missing and the shelf I was looking for couldn't possibly be in front of that person, could it?
If I remembered correctly, materials related to history were supposed to be at the very end.

I stole a quick look to the side.
Father made no move to get out of the way, and slowly turned the pages of the book. Hey, you must sense me telling you to move out of the way.

Move, make way, please step aside. I tried sending him my thoughts, but it was ineffective.
He moved at his own sweet pace. Everything about him, from his impassive eyes chasing the characters to the bony, pale finger flipping the pages, seemed to say there was no one else beside him.
His indifferent profile, which irritated me so much, was nothing but a pretty face.

"You'll burn a hole in me staring like that."

"!"

How long had I had been staring at him?

I remembered his fingers going back and forth four or five times. I didn't keep count after that so I wasn't sure, but an appalled sound came out of me.

"If you have business with me, say it. What do you have a mouth for?" he asked dispassionately.

"……"

The words he said were very reasonable. But it really ticked me off. *Asshole.* Mentally bunching my hands into fists, I pasted a smile on my face.

"Excuse me. I wanted to read a book on history," I said, implicitly telling him to move, but my father didn't look like he could be bothered.

It seemed like he had no intention of yielding his spot. He looked at me and the shelves, and after a short while he opened his mouth.

"Which era?"

"……?"

"I'm telling you to state the subject you wish to research."

Why was he asking about that?
I was puzzled. When I didn't answer him, he expressionlessly asked, *Are you slow?*

ARGHHHHH! I'M SOOOOOO PISSED OFF!!!

"The Dark Lord!"

The moment I shouted at him in irritation, my father stopped moving for a moment.
Those unique eyes with its color like thin ice reflected my image. His emotions couldn't be read, and I faltered under his stare.

"Do you want a fairy tale?"

"…no."

His low voice was as flat as ever. Anger and delight were absent; no fragment of emotion could be detected.
But for some reason, I was terrified. As if a blade was being pushed against the back of my neck, and my heart cowered in fear.

Perhaps I'd unwittingly brought the dragon's wrath upon myself.

Still, I couldn't help but negate him.

"The Dark Lord is not a character inside a story. He does not exist as a fable to lull a child keeping late hours to sleep."

"You wish to say he was real? Something that is no more, and remains only in the descriptions of ancient texts?"

"Documents were the living proof of our ancestors. Several hundred years' worth of time have passed, but even after the memories of people have faded, the gift our ancestors have left behind are the methods we can use to struggle against the dark."

Unintentionally, I began to get worked up as talked back to him.
I couldn't back down *precisely* because I knew the Dark Lord existed in this world.

How much horror did the people who fought against the Dark Lord face? How much did they suffer?
They were witness to a strength that defied knowledge, that single-handedly laid waste to all. But even when they continuously lost their homes, were killed, and trampled underfoot, they struggled without giving up hope. I couldn't help but hold awe and respect for those people.

For their military success, for the proof of a miracle. For the way of life they continued to go against.
A descendant from the kingdom that sealed the Dark Lord, the ruler of that kingdom, was not allowed to ridicule it as a fairy tale.

"I said I wanted to read a history book. Please, do not misunderstand."

From below I glared at him like I was facing off with him.
Clamping down on my panic, I somehow put on a brave face, but my father was neither angry nor surprised.

All he said was, "I see."

……huh? That was it?
Even tricks have a limit. Earlier, you seemed angry enough to instantly execute

me if I made a single wrong comment.
The intimidating air vanished. After a while, nothing remained and I even thought it had been an illusion.

Closing the book in his hand and returning it to the shelf, my father passed by me.
Really, what just happened!

“If that is the case, you should stop by my chambers later.”

“Huh…?”

I had a delayed response to the words his dropped as left, before rounding my eyes in shock.
Confused, I turned around. Feet moving without pause, my father continued like we were trading gossip.

“Books relating to the Dark Lord are in my control. If you wish, I will show you.”

I merely stood still, unable say a single word in response to his parting back.

The Reincarnated Princess's Reflection.

The Reincarnated Princess's Reflection.

"Have they been shown to you?"

"Not…as of yet."

Sir Leonhard sat across from me inside the carriage. When he questioned me, I looked down.
My father was too busy, so I've had difficulty catching him during the day, and even when dark fell. I considered imposing on him right before he went to sleep, but couldn't manage to work up the courage.
Under one of his absolute zero stares, if he were to question whether I lacked common sense or not, I'd cry. Yeah no, that was a lie. I'd probably flip out.

"He's busy throughout the day, and I lose courage when I think of disturbing his work. But, the sooner the better, right? I've decided I'll ask him to make time, even if it takes a few days."

It sounded like I was trying to justify myself, but the words just fell out of their own volition.
When I peeped up at him with a *You must be surprised, right?* look, for some reason Sir Leonhard looked uneasy. Rather than shock, it seemed like he was worried about something.

"What troubles you?" I asked him timidly.
His jet black eyes seemed to settle on me with hesitation.

"Have you said a word of your meeting with His Majesty to Prince Christof?"

"I haven't," I said with clarity.

Sir Leonhard's expression became even more clouded.
Looking at his brows furrowed in worry, I was impatient. What was it, have I messed up?

Though I did encounter my father—who I hardly ever saw—I hadn't

considered it information I needed to go out of my way to report, but had I been mistaken?

“Uh, umm…”

Silent the entire time, Sir Leonhard took notice of my self-doubt forming and softened his expression, like he was trying to let me calm down.

“Ahh, it was nothing. I am not criticizing you, princess. Please, do not make such a worried face.”

I must have looked absolutely pathetic.
Sir Leonhard smiled, like he was trying to make a child feel better. I wasn’t exactly happy to be treated like a child, but right now my relief far outweighed my concerns.
I’m so glad…I didn’t make him mad.

“Your Royal Highness…”

“Yes?”

“The story you have inclined to share with me, have you not considered sharing with Prince Christof?”

“Huh?”

At the unexpected question, I stared with eyes wide.
It took a moment for my brain to catch up. The story I told Sir Leonhard…in other words, telling my brother? About me knowing about the future?

That was…

“No.”

It slipped out, speedily and without hesitation.

“I can’t tell him. If I must, I would rather tell my father,” I said decisively.

Sir Leonhard’s eyes opened as wide as mine had.
Mouth dropped open, and eyes rounded. I wanted to take my time enjoying him make such a rare expression, but the timing was entirely inappropriate.
I cleared my throat to cover up my split second of fascination, and continued to explain myself.

“My story makes no sense, but I’m sure my brother would still believe me. Additionally, I *do* believe it would be to my advantage for any course of action I take from here on out.”

“Then, whyever?”

“While Chris *is* my older brother, at the same time, he is *also* the heir to the throne. I mustn’t do anything to influence him, such as giving him information that may or may not be true. The future I saw has already begun to change, and not one thing remains that is for certain.”

“Your Royal Highness…”

“That is where I stand.”

After I gave him a plausible reason, my serious expression remained unchanged as I added another thought.

“If the future I have seen was to come true, somewhere down the road my brother will one day have to use me for the good of the kingdom, won’t he? Not as my brother, but as the prince.”

“……”

Sir Leonhard did not refute me.
He remained silent, expression grave. He offered no temporary words of diversion, but that was very much like him.
Even if the reality was hard, he would never cover it up with a kind lie, and his honesty was what I loved about him.

My expression softened with the strength of my feelings.

“However, I’m sure it won’t be because he is cold and unfeeling. My kind brother will surely suffer from worry, because he treasures me and Johan a lot.”

The night the royal palace was attacked, I had believed him to be able to use me for his purpose.
He needed to be able to draw a line between the two; it was not a matter of him using his little sister, but being capable of making the princess fulfill her duties. I myself wished to be useful, so there was no need for him to feel indebted to me.

And yet, Chris had protected me the way an older brother would his little

sister. He had spoiled me, and hugged me close.
Even though he was probably the same when it came to not having anyone to spoil him.

Like hell I'd be able to tell someone like that to, *Use me for what you need.*

"My real intention is, very simply, commonplace selfishness."

I was still content to be a child.
I'll stay his spoiled little sister.

Until my brother does not *"use"* me, and places his confidence in and *"trust"* in me.

"I have no desire to be used by my brother, and I don't want to let him use me, either."

"……"

Sir Leonhard stared at me, and a long silence fell inside the carriage. Only the sound of the wheels hitting the ground was audible, but it wasn't unpleasant.

How much time has passed, I wondered.
Sir Leonhard sighed briefly and smiled.
He wasn't upset with my outrageously selfish reasons, and only looked upon me kindly.

"I understand. If it is as you have you said, this conversation will go no farther than us."

"Sir Leon…thank you very much."

"Not at all."

It is not something you should give thanks for, he smiled wryly.
The next second, his expression became serious, and he bowed his head.

"I am merely your lowly servant, but I have overstepped my bounds. Please, forgive me."

It was apology that would accept nothing but a clear explanation of what he thought of himself.
I also liked this side of him a lot. But, it felt like I was being pushed away, so I felt

lonely.

If I wasn't the princess, would he be more willing to be at ease with me? I wondered.
But if that were the case, he wouldn't be able to protect me like this.

"Your Royal Highness? What is the matter?"

"……"

If I thought about it, his interactions with the Priestess was because she was the Priestess.
He didn't just pamper her. He scolded her, and at times, he cheered her on as well. He called her name with that deep voice. And patted her head with that big hand of his.

How nice… It wasn't fair.

I also want that big hand to pat me. *You're silly,* I want him to joking say to me. I want him to give me a light poke and affectionately say, *There's no helping you.*

"Sorry. It's nothing."

But, none of it was possible. As the princess, I had my limits, and it was a wish that could never come true.
A whim as impossible as asking for the moon.

It was saddening, but that was reality.
There was no use hoping, so I couldn't bring trouble to Sir Leonhard again.

I made up my mind, and smiled at him to put him at ease, but…

"Your Royal Highness."

"Um…y-yes?"

"It does not appear to be nothing."

Sir Leonhard wasn't deceived at all.
On the contrary…he looked a little angry. Was it just my imagination?

The Reincarnated Princess's Selfishness.

The Reincarnated Princess's Selfishness.

Sir Leonhard folded his hands between his knees and abruptly leaned forward. His serious eyes were overpowering, and I unintentionally pulled back, but a lack of space behind prevented me from putting much distance between us.

"Your Royal Highness."

"Yes…"

He spoke with his voice even more devoid of emotion than before, and my spine straightened itself out.
My sense of unease was right on point. He was beyond angry.

I had almost no memories of getting reprimanded from the moment I was reborn in this world, but I did in the previous world. My parents, the teachers, and the elderly would scold with their voices, while their eyes flashed admonishment.
Oh, how I've missed this feeling, but I had no time for indulging in sentimentality. All I could do was brace my shoulders, and wait for the words to come.

H-he was a kinda scary, though…

"Pardon the rudeness, I have something I would like to say, if I may. Is that acceptable?"

"Ye—es."

The only thing I've been saying for a while was "yes".
There are so many different ways you can say "yes", I thought, like I was trying to escape reality. But there was no way out.
Sir Leonhard asked permission to speak, but his words no longer held the semblance of a question. It was a statement, leaving no room for argument.
Perhaps I should say *Yes, you may speak.* Though he was not asking, said my inner voice.

“Earlier, princess, you said would not tell His Royal Highness. In other words, the only one who can directly lend you aid in this matter is myself.”

Acknowledging his words with my eyes, I nodded.
Like a bobblehead, shaking my head over and over. His gaze was sharp as he stared at me.

“And yet, you continue to swallow your words. If you held back until even I, the only one aware of your situation, am shut out, then whoever did you intend to ask assistance from?”

“……”

Exposed to his displeasure, my body jumped with a start.
Even though he noticed me gulping in terror, Sir Leonhard’s expression did not soften at all.

“When one is forced to deal with a difficult problem, expecting support from others first instead of giving more effort than one can handle on their own may seem lacking in integrity to a hardworking person like you. Perhaps, it may go against what you perceive to be right. But justice does not necessarily exist in what is correct.”

Do you understand? Sir Leonhard looked at me to confirm.
Without a word, I nodded a little.

Strangely enough, I felt no resentment. Was it because his experience with people lent weight to his words? Or was it because I didn’t have a character that fit appropriately for my age?
Either way, his words easily soaked into me.

Even if it wasn’t right and I wouldn’t know intuitively, there was a clear line between doing the “good thing” by giving my all to do my best, and depending on others to take care of everything.
For someone like me who hated to be wrong, I continuously chose to lean towards doing “the right thing” whenever possible. If I did that, I could find myself peace of mind.

But I’m sure it was merely another type of escape. To me, it was nothing more than choosing the easiest path to walk down.

A concept such as righteousness was undoubtedly different depending on who was looking, and the angle they observed it from.

“After this, the path you have chosen will be terribly harsh on you. I do not know what pitfalls lie in wait for you, even when the way may seem paved. Before you take a step forward, please take my hand. Don’t think about whether you’ll have gone there on your own where you can.”

My back straightened with his words.
I guess I understood, and also not at all.
I see. I’d invited Sir Leonhard onto this road where unknown dangers lurked. Only one person, and it was him.

I made the decision to set things into motion myself, so the only person I’d planned to have take responsibility for my actions had been me.
But I was mistaken. If something were to happen to me, Sir Leonhard would absolutely put the blame on himself. Even if it was not something the law would punish, he would probably judge himself. He was that sort of man.

Regardless of the heavy burden I’ve allowed him to carry, without a single word of condemnation for me, he’ll only try to help.

“There must be a lot of things you cannot consult with a boorish man of obdurate nature like myself. However, if you do not share all that you wish to, your heart will be filled with trouble. No matter how small the worry, or how insignificant you have deemed it, please voice everything. Hold nothing back, because I have already decided to stand by you.”

“Yes…”

I nodded, holding in my urge to cry.
His expression softened. I was even more moved to tears at the kindness in his eyes, which only offered praise.

When I wiped away the tears that had formed, his hand moved with a twitch. His large hand had lifted from his knee, but stopped midway, and clenched into a fist.

“……”

Had he been about to wipe away my tears?

Sir Leonhard was a gentleman, so the possibility wasn't zero. But because I was the princess, he had probably hesitated to touch me.

In the end, his hand returned to his knee without doing anything, and I looked on regretfully.

"Is something amiss…?"

Sir Leonhard looked at me strangely, noticing the way I stared at him with meaning.

No, I tried to deny at once, but kept my mouth shut. This was what had made him disappointed in the first place.

But it had absolutely nothing to do with avoiding the dangers of the future. Only my desires.

Round, and round, and round my thoughts went in circles. It was a completely useless exercise, leaving only an empty, creaking sound.

Sir Leonhard did not try to press me for an answer. His dark eyes only continued observe.
If he had scolded me and said *I just said it earlier, didn't I?* it would have been easier to speak. I could make an excuse, and my feelings of guilt would diminish. But I shouldn't think like that.

"May…may I…"

I broke off.
Even if I was not minding my appearance at last, the words did not seem to want to come out. For a moment, I cut off my words, and took a big breath. I cleared my throat once.

"…say something s-selfish?"

"By all means."

His eyes gently smiled at me.
I wished he wouldn't look so amused, like he was taking care of a small child.

It saddened me, but it was my reality. I was an awkward child, and I wasn't good at being demanding of others, but this was how I looked to others. That was why I needed to live up to the maximum of my potential.

“I would like you to be more rude to me.”

“……pardon?”

Huh? Something was wrong. When I tried voicing myself, I couldn’t find the right expression.
Sir Leonhard froze for about ten seconds from what I said. His expression remained petrified as he asked me again.
I’ve definitely chosen the wrong words.

“A little…different from discourteously. Crudely…roughly?”

“Whichever it is, the same meaning is retained. Your Royal Highness, what in the world are you thinking about?”

With every word that flew out of my mouth his expression became more thunderous. Sir Leonhard put a hand on his head and looked down. He took a deep breath like he was holding back tremendous shock, and looked at me with suspicious eyes through a crack in his fingers.

“Sir Leon, I believe the way you treat me is too polite.”

“……”

I’d wondered if he’d be upset, but his eyes became rounded.
He’d been struck dumb by my unexpected words.

“The Commander of the Royal Knights deferring to the princess with courtesy is the utmost correct conduct. I understand. However, I can’t help but feel a great distance between us.”

“Your Royal Highness…”

When I looked down, bewilderment mixed in with Sir Leonhard’s voice.

“I was happy when you scolded me earlier. It was the first time anyone was mad at me, so it was bit scary, but…it will always be better than being treated like glass. From now on, if I do something wrong, I want you to scold me. You don’t need to excuse yourself ahead of time. I won’t mind at all if you poke me, either.”

“I would not dare!”

“So you find it disagreeable…”

I glared at him in reproach. Bashfully, he held his tongue.

“……”

“No one ever tells me what to do. That’s why sometimes even I am at a loss and don’t know where to go. I want to be scolded and praised like any regular girl. And also, if at all possible, by *you*…”

“!”

My desperate expression was reflected in his bulging eyes.
Even if I had to face him when he was confused, I had no intention of drawing back. Letting go of my pursuit meant not obtaining what I wished for.

This was the first battle. Good luck, Rosemarie.

“I don’t mind if you keep up the same appearance in a public location. I’m fine if it is only at a time when we are alone, but I want you to feel comfortable to be yourself. It’s only a little, so please let me get closer to you.”

“……”

Sir Leonhard continued to stare at me like a stone statue.
Well, I suppose. If the little princess were to suddenly throw out impassioned words similar to a love confession, anyone would be thrown off guard. He’d be left wondering what to do. Yeah.

After several seconds, he came back to his senses and covered his face with his hand. I couldn’t see the expression on his face as he dropped his head down, so I had no idea what was going through his mind.

“Sir Leon…?”

“…ahh—……”

“?”

Groaning, he looked up. The brows creased in displeasure were drawn together, but his cheeks were slightly red so he wasn’t entirely scary.
Sir Leonhard stirred up his hair into a mess, and sighed deeply.

Did I anger him…?

“I’m not angry.”

Seeing how worried I’d become, Sir Leon smiled wryly.
Great. I sighed in relief. Then a different question took my attention.

“What…? Did I speak out loud?”

“It was written on your face. Your thoughts appear quite easily.”

Seriously? I thought I was born from a lineage full of expressionless people. Flustered, I grabbed my cheeks, and Sir Leonhard smiled like he was exhausted.

“You’re unusual. Normal women would be more delighted to be treated with politeness. To think I’d ever be asked to treat you with rudeness…you really are a genius of messing with me.”

“B-but…”

“You should be proud. The only one who could manipulate me is most likely you.”

His eyes narrowed in mean-spirited laughter.
A big hand gently patted my head.

“……”

For a split second I couldn’t comprehend, *Have I woken something up?* My eyes were opened until they could get no bigger, and he chuckled in amusement.

“When I poke you, you must forgive me. Princess.”

Without a doubt, I had confidence I was the happiest person in the world right now.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry.

I’m so glad I went for it.

I was fit to burst with happiness, and only childlike thoughts like that were coming to mind.

“Your face is bright red.”

“!”

When he pointed it out, I covered my face with both hands in a panic. My cheeks were definitely hot. If I were a steamed bun, it would seem like steam was blowing off me.

Sir Leonhard burst into laughter as he watched me try to cool down somehow, flipping the palms against my cheeks to the back of my hands.

He’s *terrible*. He was covering his mouth with his hand, but I could tell. Trying to cover up with a cough when his act was already exposed!

“You must be enjoying yourself…”

I couldn’t help it if I stared at him rather coldly.

Trifling with the tender heart of a young girl in love was not permissible behavior just because he happened to be Sir Leonhard.

“I’m sorry.”

He readily apologized, but his eyes were laughing.

I was struck by sudden understanding. Had he always been slightly mean?

He asked questioned me from the opposite seat.

“Do you dislike this side of me?”

“Not at all,” I replied instantly.

Sir Leonhard gazed at me in wonder.

It seemed like he hadn’t been expecting my answer.

Don’t get me wrong, it didn’t particularly make me pleased to get teased, got it?!

It was because he was different from Klaus and the others, he didn't have a fetish like they did!

My reason was very simple!

"I'm happy you're not keeping up appearances with me."

I truly was very happy to be able to see his true self.
When I poured out my feelings honestly, Sir Leonhard made a face like he'd swallowed a frog.
Why did he have to look like that? Seeing my expression, he gave me a troubled smile.

"I don't mind with you."

"Huh?"

Not understanding the meaning his words hinted at, I gave him questioning look, but he stopped talking.

"Well. Let's leave the chitchat here and get down to business."

"OK…"

He seemed to be distracting me so that I couldn't understand, but he was right to say we had no spare time for idle talk. He went to great pains to detach Klaus from me, so I should use my time effectively.
Young girls in love wasn't a frivolous conversation, though…

"This time you're starting measures that can prevent disease?"

"Yes."

Sir Leonhard pulled out a map from a pocket with a hardened expression.

"Excuse the proximity."

"What?"

Hed stood up from his seat and settled beside me.
His handsome face was right next to me, and I stared with my mouth open.

S-so close…!!

In contrast to how I'd turned to stone from earth-shattering nerves, Sir

Leonhard was in complete work mode. His profile as his gaze dropped down to the map was the image of seriousness itself.
I became ashamed of my of shaken composure, and chanted a spell to myself for the beating of my heart to *Settle down, down!*

“You were saying the disease spread from the south, but do you know the exact location?”

“I don’t know for certain, but…I’d like to say south-southwest. Close to the national border with our neighbors in the Kingdom of Vind.”

Taking my cue from Sir Leonhard’s calm voice, I gradually calmed down. After sucking in a deep breath, I turned my attention to the map.

At the heart of a giant continent shaped like one side of a bird’s wing was my kingdom, Nebel. Blessed with great weather, the peninsular portion that jutted out at the bottom was tropical in nature. Even to the north, warm lands accounted for a great portion of it, and the only area where snow fell in a notable density was in the northernmost mountain ranges.
I’m happy it was such an easy place to live in, but not everything was good. A virus can’t move in a cold place, but made itself right at home in my kingdom it made itself right at home, even among the upper crust.

“Isn’t that the peninsula?”

“Yes.”

In the peninsula with its tropical climate, numerous diseases were likely to thrive, but people who made their homes there had built up immunity, so they didn’t take as considerable the same damage.
Furthermore, the portion of the land connected to the continent was extremely thin, drawn tight like an hourglass. Of course there was communication between the two, but they had their own culture and rarely left their territory, so even the disease had a hard time spreading through the continent.

“Perhaps the disease spread because we became involved in the war between Vind and Sckellz.”

“Your reason?”

“The first is the season. Within a year of the beginning of the war, disease

began to spread. Two, inside my dream, the skin color of the people persecuted as ‘the source of the disease’ were different from the citizens of Nebel.”

Resting his chin in his hand, Sir Leonhard took a moment to think, and arrived at the same conclusion I did.

“Skin color…! Meaning, refugees?”

I nodded my head, and continued.

“I’ve heard that there are people with dark skin living in the massive forest that stretches throughout the southern lands of Vind. Driven out of their homes, I think they might stream into Nebel.”

“If I’m not mistaken, were the horrors of war to see the forests burn, instead of escaping north to a land situated right in the middle of the conflict, it would make more sense for them aim for the neighboring kingdom. If the disease began to spread at the same time refugees began pouring into Nebel, don’t you find it odd these targets who stood out became the scapegoats?”

“Yes.”

“Did you yourself also believe the source to be them? Or did you also find it a suspicious accusation?”

“Taking sides is dangerous…but I don’t believe they were the carriers.”

If it was the same as the world I was previously from, then many viruses likely existed in the jungles of this world as well.
For the dark-skinned groups that have lived on those lands since ancient times, the severity has not increased because they became used to the disease, but it was a different story for the citizens of Nebel who had absolutely no developed antibody.

We were fortunate it wasn’t a disease with a high mortality rate, but the exhaustion caused by the war and the lack of adequate medicine seemed to hasten its spread.

“I am of the same opinion. Similar to our kingdom’s peninsula, the southern forests have many unknown diseases. Vind is exceedingly unlikely to start a war for the time being, but refining preventive measures against disease is sound

practice nonetheless.”

Immediately, if possible, he added.
At his additional words, I lifted my head and directed my gaze in his direction.

I knew it was necessary to provide measures because the threat had not disappeared.
But why did we have to rush? It was a bridge that would need to crossed quickly, but there were a lot of other taksks that needed doing. My face reflected my questions, and Sir Leonhard nodded.

“Even if it was not caught in the flames of war, there is chance the forests will still be lost,” he said.

Trade could increase with Flamme to the soutwest, contingent upon Vind destroying the threat against them known as Sckellz.

Flamme was a kingdom surrounded on three fronts by the sea, and there were many people who took jobs that were affected by voyages and fishing. Naturally, the shipbuilding was also prosperous industry, and in order to build their ships, they needed timber.
That meant the resource Vind had their eyes set on selling to Flamme would be the southern woodlands!

“So they’ve begun deforesting the woods,” I murmured.

“You save me with your quick understanding.”

Sir Leonhard looked at me with approval.

“Stopping them is…impossible, isn’t it?”

No matter how many alliances existed between our kingdoms, a foreign princess had no say in this matter.
No one knew better than me, but I dropped it without giving up hope. But, Sir Leonhard wasn’t the type to spout pointless words of consolation.

“Some will have to experience it firsthand before they are willing to listen.”

I held my tongue at his straightforward opinion.
I had no disagreement. It was sad, but I thought the same.

There was no time for me to be depressed. There were was much for me to do.

I pulled myself together, and opened my mouth to speak.

“Then…—?!

And then it happened.
The horse whinnied, and the big carriage shook.

“Highness!!”

Without a moment’s delay, Sir Leonhard pulled me into his arm and drew his sword from its scabbard.

What in the world?!

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (2)

After the shock, the carriage came to a sudden standstill.
I’d slipped off the seat, with Sir Leonhard supporting me. His handsome face was a harsh mask, and the atmosphere had become tense.

“I will go assess the situation. Your Highness, take care to not move from this spot.”

I nodded silently. Sir Leonhard released me, and put a hand on the carriage door.

“I am terribly sorry!”

However, a voice from outside called out slightly faster than he could throw open the door.

“Your Highness is not injured?”

“Her Highness is safe. What happened?”

Sir Leonhard kept me safely behind him as he directed his question outside.

“Sir, someone suddenly jumped in front of the carriage.”

“……”

When Sir Leonhard opened the door, I saw my escort and the ashen coachman were on the other side.

It occurred to me that I was probably just as pale as the coachman.
Wait, what? He said someone jumped out? Th-that person wasn’t run over, were they?! It was such a big crash…were they okay?!

“The wounded person?”

“Avoided, so I believe they are safe, but—”

Sir Leonhard alighted from the carriage, and shut the door while he held a conversation with the coachman.

Left to my own devices inside the carriage, there was nothing else to do but imagine what had happened outside from their conversation. According to the broken snippets of their conversation I could catch, it seems like a young boy had jumped in front of the carriage.

Seems like he somehow managed to avoid injuries to himself, so things were looking up.

I breathed a little easier, feeling relieved.
But the conversation suddenly came to a halt. I sensed no disturbing indications, but there was surprise in Sir Leonhard's voice.

What was it? I became extremely curious.

"Your Highness."

"Y-yes?"

I'd opened the door a crack, and could hear the voices outside.
That meant I was improperly positioned with my head stuck against the door, ears pricked. In a panic, I flew back to my seat.

His impatient tone of voice changed to one of surprise, but Sir Leonhard continued without minding my conduct. Rather than say he ignored my strange behavior, it was more accurate that he was ignoring such a slight concern.

"It has become a small problem."

"Please give your report," I responded, fixing my sitting posture.
I didn't think someone like *me* could do something about a matter Sir Leonhard would call *trouble,* but the person with the highest social standing was me. That meant I was responsible.
I was fired up to do my duty, but in contrast to my enthusiasm, Sir Leonhard only admitted after an uncomfortable stretch of silence, "The one who jumped out is the son from the noble household of the Viscountcy of Diebold."

"……"

Diebold. It sounded awfully familiar.

Closing my eyes, I brooded.
Even though I'd heard it before, I couldn't remember. *Diebold, Diebold,* I

repeated to myself, searching my memories.

"……!"

I suddenly had a flashback of the graphics of a man with a bewitching pretty face.

Long, black hair with a tinge of blue, and long-slitted eyes of the same color. Thin lips that always sported a mysterious smile,* and made it difficult to read his emotions.
His was entirely dressed in the pure white robes of a priest. With a single glance he felled the people into disarray. A man with a dangerous appeal—Michael von Diebold.

So, it was *him.*
I was ecstatic over what I just remembered, then became pale in the next instant.

Isn't he the Dark Lord!!
Diebold's son was the Dark Lord, wasn't he!!

Completely unprepared for this turn of events and the bomb that had been thrown at me, I was greatly muddled and at a loss for what to do.
In the end, I escaped from reality. Like so. *The House of Diebold has two sons, if I remembered correctly.*

"Is he the eldest son?"

Sir Leonhard did me the honor of politely smashing my useless attempt at denial. He sounded somewhat astonished.

"He is Michael von Diebold."

And so he is!

"Your Highness. There is no danger posed to you here. Will you not do us the honor of descending?" Sir Leonhard asked. Perhaps he thought I wasn't moving fast enough.

He words did remind that Michael wasn't the Dark Lord yet, so I breathed a sigh of relief.
The day he became the Dark Lord was still many years in the future. Supposing I

failed to destroy the flag.

“I understand.”

I took a deep breath.
I opened the door, and climbed down the carriage with my hand held out in demand. The one who met me was the guard with his lowered head, the coachman, and…an unfamiliar boy.

“……”

Who?

A question mark floating over my head, I stared at the boy fixedly.
I thought I heard Sir Leonhard say Michael was here, but there was not a trace of beautiful, dangerous young man—who had looked perfectly at home against the moonlit night, bathed in blood.

“Ah, um…”

Black hair with a tinge of blue, evenly cut to the back of his neck. Long-slitted eyes peeked through the space between his long bangs.
He was tall but thin, so I couldn’t get rid of my lanky impression. The words *a gangly child* came to mind.
His shoulders were hunched forward. He looked around restlessly, eyebrows drawn in worry like the shape of a roof. Nonsensical moans leaked out, his voice plaintive. Whichever direction I looked at him from, I couldn’t find in this boy the Dark Lord who had been filled with brimming self-confidence.

The boy stirred, growing uncomfortable under my appraising eyes, and I fell silent for a moment.

What was the point of making the Dark Lord (the guy who will become him) have stranger anxiety?!

“Highness,” Sir Leonhard reproached me, like he was unable to watch from the sidelines when it seemed the boy was about to tear up.

Like he was trying to protect himself, Michael made a cute cry that sounded like *meow*.
Hm? Why a meow?

When I looked closer, there was a completely black cat in his arms. A pair of blue gems stared back, looking at me doubtfully in suspicion. Most *definitely* cute.

“It seems like he was trying to save the cat from getting run over when he jumped in front of the carriage.”

“Is that so? Are you unhurt?”

Michael blushed furiously, and dropped his head.

“Eh—uh…y-yes,” he replied with scarcely any words in a very thin voice.

Even if I tried to look at it in a favorable light, he wasn’t very attractive like this…but, I did think he was cute. It was probably rude to think of an older boy as *cute,* though.

“Ah—I, I am apprenticed to a priest. M-my name—is Mi-Michael von Diebold. I—was u-unaware this was a carriage of the royal house. Please—forgive—me.”

STOP ALREADY! I silently yelled.
I felt guilty when he tried so desperately to apologize even though he had difficulty getting the words out, but I could handle no more. To be frank, because I had memories of it from my previous life, I couldn’t think this fault that turned his speech inarticulate from nerves to be anyone else’s problem.

“It is a blessing none of us were hurt,” I said, and aimed a smile loaded with forgiveness at him.

The blushing boy lowered his head into his chest even more.
It was pitiful looking at his form curling into itself, so I wanted to let him go quickly, but there was something on my mind.

What was Michael doing in a place like this alone?
Though we were in the middle of town, we were a great distance away from the Great Temple. Wasn’t it a bit far for an errand?

“What brings an honorable priest of the Great Temple here?” Sir Leonhard asked the question in my stead.

Did he also sense something amiss?

Michael mistook the words for an accusation.

“Er—aahh um, I had no intention of doing som—anything wrong.”

The blood drained from his face, and he desperately shook his head.

“Worry not. I am not criticizing you. I thought perhaps to offer help if something troubled you.”

Sir Leonhard gave him a nice business smile, and the tension fell out of Michael’s shoulders. Unconsciously? he squeezed the cat in a hug. The human-friendly cat did not make any attempts to run away.

“M-my work is done, so the time is mine to use, and I go to the orphanage.”

According to his story, after his duties were complete at the Great Temple, he would make his way to the orphanage and lend a helping hand.
It’s probably out of self-satisfactation, he added, and looked down.

Who was this little angel?! Such a good child!

“Not at all. I think you are amazing,” I said with a smile, and Michael’s face beamed.

“T-truthfully, I want to go to distant villages, too, and not just the ones in the royal city. I-I have not yet, received permission.”

“!”

I had been making *yeah, yeah!* sounds of encouragement, feeling like I was doting a small child as I listened to the words Michael spoke with such delight, but I pulled up short on the way.

He said he wanted to go to the distant villages?

Even though the war didn’t break out, and the disease wasn’t spreading yet, the future hadn’t changed?
The apprentice priest was brimming with energy to set out and make his rounds around the entire kingdom if only he could obtain permission. His ability to take action vividly overwhelming his introverted nature.

“……”

Bad timing. Seriously bad timing.
I needed to do something, one way or another, but I only felt the pressure and

could think of nothing good.

Sir Leonhard, who had been keeping quiet, intercepted.

“Your Highness, I have a request.”

A request? I turned to him questioningly, and he slowly blinked his eyes twice to send a message.

“I have a report to make of previously detected suspicious individuals in this area. Something may happen to the sir priest if he returns alone. If Your Highness sees fit to grant permission, I would like to travel together with him. Once Your Highness’s tasks are over, how do you find the suggestion of sending him as far back as the Great Temple?”

“I approve!”

“You are very gracious.”

Nice move, Sir Leonhard!
That’s right, this way we can kidnap him, and persuade him along the way! Even if it sounded unreasonable, the next time we meet it’d be nice to get him to make an agreement with me!

“Er, um——huh?”

Unable to keep track of the development, Michael became confused and in his arms the black cat carefreely cried *Mweoow.*

*** Archaic smile/ancient smile—there was simply no equivalent. Think of Buddha with his everlasting smile.**

BTW, you don’t pronounce Michael the Jordan way. Since it’s in German, and going off of the katakana, it’s more like (in very standard American-English) ME-HA-AIL. I should provide pronunciations for all the names. Anyway, save the boy, Rose!

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (3)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (3)

The carriage finally made its way to the front a giant estate made of stone.
It did not have the gaudiness of baroque architecture—the uniformity of the color blended in with the surrounding landscape, revealing the refinement of its owner.
Leaving the wide entrance hall behind, I was guided through a hallway decorated with paintings to a parlor.

The man waiting inside stood up.
He watched my approach, expression gentling as it recovered from shock.

“I have been expecting you, Miss Marie.”

“It has been a long time, Master Julius.”

This fine figure of a man who lifted my hand and kissed it in an elegant gesture was Julius zu Eicher.
He was the uncle of Georg, one of the love interests, and an excellent trader in the process of spreading his network throughout the continent.
I’m indebted to him for all he did for Georg’s mother, and even after that case I continued to keep exchanges with him. Mostly in order to satisfy my private wants.

“Truly. You have become still more beautiful in the short time I have not seen you.”

You have become such a lovely lady, I can no longer thoughtlessly pick you up in my arms, he said with a mischievous smile.

Ooh, very skillful.
I felt more admiration than shyness at his smoothly delivered compliment. Was it an innate ability of his to deliver his words without a hint of sarcasm, and also not make one feel disgusted?
None of the other men in the family, neither Lord Eicher nor Georg, had the

same skill. The head of the family was the type to speak with a force of attitude, and the current Georg was a naive boy.
He was good looking, tall, a gentleman, and rich to boot. On top of that, even though he was only a second son, his lineage came straight out of a Margraviate household. It was a miracle such a good catch was still unmarried at age 28.
Well, the man himself probably had no intention of settling down.

“I apologize for suddenly imposing on you. You must surely be busy, were you forced to changed your schedule?”

“No, I am overjoyed you decided to contact me.”

Or so he said, but I was conscientious of how high-highhandedly I forced him to accommodate me.
I didn’t want to interfere with his work, but catching people who bustled from country to country was quite difficult.
The man who loved his older brother’s family worried greatly about his sickly sister-in-law, his brother’s inability to be honest with himself, and his diffident nephew. Whenever he could, tried to be close to home.
However, when all problems were removed, his days were spent on trips to make his business bigger, happily traveling to various places.

“Occasionally Georg will even do nothing but criticize, telling me to be more appropriate in conduct.”

“Georg will, you said?” I questioned him.

I couldn’t imagine Georg ever doing something like that.

“Yes. Lately he has become more and more unendearing. I *am* happy with the growth of my nephew, but I am troubled by his incessant nagging.”

“……”

Seeing the way I frowned and kept silent, Master Julius grinned wryly.

“Hard to imagine, is it not? It must be because the Georg you knew was timid and gentle like a young girl. I think you will be surprised when you meet him.”

The last time we met was for Georg’s 9th birthday.
He was two years older than me, so he should be 13 years old now. In these four

years this older boy would have certainly gotten bigger, but has the person inside changed as well?

“He should be working in another room today. I’ve kept your presence here a secret, so shall we go give him a surprise?”

Master Julius placed a finger against his lips, lowering his voice like we were having a secret conversation. He looked to be enjoying himself. Even though he was one of the finest men around, the boyish quality remaining told me he was still be the same gap moe person.

“Certainly,” I answered, lowering my voice in a similar fashion.

He broke out in a delighted smile.

“I have a lot of souvenirs for you. Whenever I happened upon rare ingredients and seasonings, I was reminded of you.”

“!”

“Would you like to see?”

Ingredients! Seasonings!!
Eyes sparkling, I took his bait.

“Yes!”

Master Julius only procured goods that were rare to our kingdom. Sometimes, goods that reminded me of Japan were mixed in, so I was secretly hoping that the day I got my hands on sticky rice was close.

I cheerfully let him take the lead, when a lost voice suddenly came from behind.

“Ah…”

It was a small voice that seemed like one could easily ignore, but the moment I heard it I suddenly remembered.
I turned my head to look at the figure of a boy standing idly about.
Which reminded me, I forcibly brought him with me. I was terrible for completely forgetting about him, lured by having what I wanted dangled in front of me.

“This boy is…?”

Following my line of sight, Master Julius took notice of Michael.

“An introduction is long overdue. This is my friend, Michael.”

“Mi-Michael von Diebold, at your service. Gr-great Temple’s…I am, apprenticed, to a priest.”

Michael bowed his head deeply.
I *was* sorry for making him feel small on top of suddenly forcing him to come with me. I was *also* sorry for introducing him as a friend when he was nothing of the sort.
I couldn’t think of a better way to introduce him…

“This is Master Julius zu Eicher. Master Julius, after all you’ve done today, it’s inexcusable, but…” I said, making a mess of my words.

He nodded cheerfully.

“I don’t mind.”

I felt guilty for taking advantage of his generosity, but I was glad I wouldn’t have to make Michael wait inside the carriage.

Once my head collected itself, I remembered the true purpose of my visit. Before I could ask him to show me what he had, I cut to the main issue.

“Medicine, you ask?”

“Yes.”

As long as there was potential for the disease to spread, I wanted to do everything I could.
Inside the game, patients suffering from serious illness appeared one after another all over Nebel. Medicine and able-bodied persons were in short supply because they were exhausted by the war, but one of the reasons will also be due to the lack of a specific medicine.
In other words, I believe the medicine available in Nebel had little effect.

It was nothing above wishful thinking to hope that medicine would exist in another kingdom, but surely there was nothing to lose by advancing the study of medicine.
Besides, with the lack of that miracle drug, it was better to have a lot of medicine

to mitigate the symptoms and its weakening effects.

“The threat posed by Sckellz disappeared, and exchanges with the southwestern kingdoms have increased. If the number of people coming and going has increased as well, what flows in will not be limited to only culture and money. Don’t you agree things with less cause for rejoicing will also be included?”

“That’s true… There are things such as endemic diseases, and people will pick them up from the places they visit. Are you suggesting we should be prepared for any eventuality?”

“Especially in the south, where feverish maladies spread easily, I hear. I’d like to increase the variety of antipyretics and painkillers we have, and talk with Miss Irene as well.”

After hearing what I had to say, Master Julius said *Hmm* and fell into deep thought.

After a moment, he said, “Recently, I found something of deep interest, but… there is a little problem.”

“A problem?”

I looked at him questioningly.
Before he would explain, Master Julius left his seat, suggesting we change our location.
Not knowing where he was going, we followed.

Master Julius came to a stop before a room at the end of a long hallway. When he gave the solid door a knock, a boy’s voice invited us inside.

“You’re bothering me.”

I couldn’t see who was inside because of the back of the tall man in front of me.

“What do you want?”

“Ahh. I am here for the medicine in question.”

“I believe that conversation is over. No matter how effective it is, we don’t have spare money or time when we have *no method* of producing it, *no location*

from which to harvest the raw materials, and *no clue* of how much variety there is."

That means you're on your own, he said, the words curt and dismissive. His voice was pleasing and clear to the ear.

"It's a bad habit of yours to become too fixated on what you take interest in. If it's not a matter of trade but your personal hobby, then do whatever you please."

"See? Not cute at all."

Master Julius turned to me and smiled wryly, allowing me to see the person inside.
A young man stood on the other side of a desk stacked with books and a rounded pile of documents.

Soft platinum blonde hair reached his shoulders, tied by a navy blue ribbon, leaving only the side of his face clear.
His skin was beyond fair, and the eyes that were framed by long lashes were violet like his mother's. That face was very similar to Lady Emma's, but I no longer thought them girly like I used to.
His build had also stretched out quite a bit, his body now that of a man's.

This pretty boy with the intellectual air put down the pen made from the flight feathers of a white bird and looked in our direction.
His eyes clashed with mine.

"……"

Within a heartbeat he became wide eyed.
He stared so hard it seemed like he'd burn a hole through the spot I stood. *I wonder what's wrong?* It was uncomfortable.

"…Miss Marie…?"

"It has been a long time, Georg."

We met again at long last, and Georg has finally become a young man capable of grabbing the hearts of marriageable young girls everywhere.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (4)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (4)

The Georg in my memories had a wishy-washy air, and was like a bright ray of sunlight in Spring. He and his mother were like two peas in a pod with their sweet good looks; his shy demeanor when he blushed was very charming.

I now got a completely different impression from the boy standing before me. He had the same coloring, and I could sense the blood relationship between him and his mother from his well-defined features, but everything else was different. From his cool-headed point of view, to his tone of voice, and even the way he silently looked at others; rather than Lady Emma he probably took after the head of…he took after his father.
I smiled, come face to face with this boy who was clad in a cold and dignified air, like a wintry morning.

“It must have been four years since last met in person. If I remember correctly, the last time was for the celebration of your ninth birthday.”

“……”

Even daunted to some extent by the atmosphere which made it hard to approach him, I forced myself to make conversation.
It really had been a long time, so I didn’t know how to start, but it was less discomforting than keeping silent. He wouldn’t respond, though!

“You’ve grown really tall. Although we were around the same height before.”

Silence.

“Is auntie doing well? It has been more than half a year since I’ve been able to visit, but I trust her physical condition hasn’t gotten worse?”

“……”

Silence.

“She seemed to be in good spirits from the letters I received, but there really

are a lot you wouldn't know unless you met in person."

"……"

Silence.
Hey, please make some sort of response. This is really awkward.
Could it be he didn't remember me? ……*can't* be, earlier I swore I heard him say my name.

Georg kept looking at me like a block of stone, silent. It bothered me.

"Georg…?"

"……Miss Marie……?"

Oh. He finally spoke.
Georg blinked, lashes so long women would be jealous slowly moving. I followed the motion with my eyes, and I smiled in response.

"Yes."

"……!!"

There was the sound of breath catching. His stared at me with wide eyes. Unknowingly, I copied his expression. What was his problem?

I tilted my head to the side, staring back at the confused and lost Georg.
His beautiful face flushed bright in an instant.

"?"

He was red to the tips of his ears like a ripe fruit, and I stared, a little taken aback. I had no idea what was going on at all.
What, what? What the hell happened, young man?

"Eh, ah…uh."

Mumbling incomprehensibly, Georg took a fumbling step forward, and I wanted to tell him he shouldn't.

"Uh, Georg…"

"Whaa?!"

And then, sure enough, he wavered.

Right away, he planted his hand down on the desk to save himself, but the stacked books were knocked and they began to fall from the desk.

“Gaah!”

The sound of rustling pages rose into the air with the avalanche of books and documents. Georg’s outstretched hands fumbled through the air, and his elbow knocked over a pot of ink with great enthusiasm.

“Ahhh!”

The emptied pot fell hard on the floor, but thanks to the the carpet it did not break. The mahogany surface of the desk was left in a tragic state, and Georg picked up the safe documents in a panic.
However, like lively fish splashing around, the documents fell to the floor.
What a disaster.

“Agh! Wait…”

“Um, maybe…”

TRIP. SPLAT.

“……”

“……”

It might be difficult to tell from only sounds, but you could probably take a good guess what happened.
What I just witnessed live was Georg first taking a precarious step and falling over himself as he chased after the documents. But the scattered books and documents were at his feet.
He lost his footing, and fell when he pitched over the books, diving to the floor.
There was nothing else to explain.

An extremely unpleasant hush fell inside the room. I stood stock still, unable to do anything.
What sort of expression should I make at a time like this?

“I want to die,” Georg whispered in a low voice from where he’d face-planted on the floor.

I understand your pain, but live on!

And then, stand up quickly as if nothing ever happened.

"…—fft."

"……?!"

After the long silence, a stifled sound burst through the air.
Speechless, I turned to my neighbor, wondering if some sort of escape method had appeared.

I trusted Master Julius to do something to break the ice.
That he would come up with a smart and elegant response the rest of us couldn't to deal with the situation, saving his nephew's pride and myself the worry.

But, heartlessly, the figure in the guise of a gentleman standing next to me was clutching his stomach and mouth, desperately holding back his laughter.

"Uhmm…Master Julius."

"Pff…ft."

Wait a minute, this was unbelievable.
Even though the rest of us broke into a cold sweat, worrying what the right response to make would be, the gentleman I'd believed would set an example for others was snickering over the disgrace of his nephew.
The next moment, he seriously began to roar with laughter.

"Hahahaha…!! I, I can't! This is *too good!*"

The cheerful sound of it began to fill the previously silent room.
A bit excessively, and he did not hold back. Confused, I lost my mind and began to wonder if laughing would make the cut sting less.
No, no, *no*. That was definitely not the right way to go about it. Throwing the spirit of a young man with a bright future into a mixer after smashing it, then pulverizing it, was the act of an ogress.

My fallacy was evident in the way Georg clutched the carpet—trembling at the humiliation.

"You find your nephew's blunder so amusing…?" he asked.

"N-no. S…sorr…pft."

“Master Julius!” I said.

“I-I apologize. Could you, *snicker*, hehehe, *cough*, wh-wait a little? Ahahahaha!”

“……”

Without finishing his apology, Master Julius relapsed into another round of laughter. It was horrible, even for him, and I tried to stop him but to no avail. Tears fell from the corners of his eyes as he continued to laugh, even through a coughing fit.

“You…old…*fogey*.”

The words were unsuitable when aimed at a good-looking man in the latter half of his 20s, but I took Georg’s feelings into consideration.
I could not stop the tears from shedding for Georg, still lying prone on the floor.

While I was at a loss, Michael had crouched down beside him before I knew it. I watched as Michael quietly handed Georg a handkerchief and looked on him kindly.

“Use it.”

“Oh, thanks…”

Georg abruptly pulled himself up and took the handkerchief, pressing it against his slightly reddened forehead.
Michael looked at Georg sympathetically when the other looked down, an embarrassed expression on his face. *Yeah, I understand,* his face said. From the way he was nodding, it seems he recognized a fellow companion.

“Until when will you laugh?”

Georg dusted off his clothes as he stood, looking coldly at the uncle who was still laughing himself silly.
At the sharp edge of his piercing glare, Master Julius stopped, raising both hands in surrender.

“It was wrong of me. Don’t be so angry.”

“How well you can say that when you laughed to such an extent.”

“My nephew, famed for his unbelievably capable character, fell flat on his face in the scene I’d been dying to see most…haha…unbelievable, isn’t it?” Master Julius let his words break off, and turned his face away. Another wave of laughter seemed like it was coming.

“So you wish to be killed. I understand. I will urgently prepare a skilled assassin for you,” Georg said, expressionless. I must have seen wrong the vein that popped up on his forehead.

“Sorry. I apologize. I won’t laugh anymore.”

“Even without you kindly telling me, I know I displayed myself in the worst light possible. I also understand that in the most important moment of my life, I irrevocably made a fool of myself. Yes, a nobody who tossed away his golden opportunity. Dregs. *Filth* no longer qualified to be human. So I ask you, what about it, blast you!”

“I’m truly sorry.”

His nephew going ballistic, Master Julius soberly bowed his head in apology. However, Georg had fluently flown into a self-disparaging tirade, and would not stop. Droning on and on like he was chanting a spell, until someone gently tapped him on the shoulder.

“You’re…”

“It’s OK. I often fail at the moments when I want to show myself in a good light.”

“!”

Georg stared wide-eyed, and Michael gave him a thumbs up.

“Besides, it’s natural as a man to be nervous because the princess is cute.”

“……thank you.”

The youths smiled in secret understanding. A wry smile appeared on the face of the watching uncle.

And now I’ve been ignored for more than ten minutes.
Someone notice, *please.*

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (5)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Inquiry. (5)

“Truly inexcusable.”

“Please, take no notice of it.”

I smiled wryly at the two people bowing at each other inside the residence of the Eicher family.
Right after the last incident, they got around to asking *“By the way, who are you?”* then Georg and Michael began to introduce themselves. It seemed to take a little under twenty minutes before they finally remembered me though.
Taking notice of me standing alone and still at the entrance, everyone rushed to apologize.
I wasn’t angry. However, I *was* envious of how quickly the boys became friendly with each other.

More important was the “medicine” Master Julius had mentioned.
I promptly broached the subject, and Georg explained it to me without putting on airs.

This is what happened. A merchant working below Master Julius had chanced upon it.
While he was staying in a Nebel port city, a sailor staying at the same inn developed a high fever.
When the merchant first heard of it, however, he had no interest because it was nothing out of the ordinary. If a voyage was long, naturally the body’s health declined, and those who fell ill were to no small extent few. Since the season was Winter, it was likely a cold.
At best, a few days would see the sailor recovered.

That merchant’s expectations were half-on point, half-off.
The next day the fever quickly broke, and the sailor seemed to have recovered, but developed a high fever again two days later.
The physician had prescribed an antipyretic, but it was practically ineffective,

and the sailor became noticeably weaker.
That was when the physician realized it was not a common cold, but it was the first time even he had been at a loss upon seeing the symptoms. It was when everyone believed the worst that aid came from the most unexpected places.

Coincidentally, a foreign ship had docked at port to avoid a storm, and when one of its sailors heard the story, he delivered a medicine to the physician. He had seen the symptoms before.
With a word of caution, seven days' worth of spare medicine were left with the physician, and it seems like he departed when the storm broke.

Taking the words of the foreign sailor to heart, the physician and his associate frantically nursed their patient.
In the end, the splendid fever lowered, and the illness was cured.

Master Julius's subordinate thought this an undoubtedly incredible medicine, and bought the remainders.

However, this was where the problem stood in their way.
Like Georg had mentioned previously, the raw materials, production method, production site were all unknown. There was no technology that could possibly analyze its properties like the modern world, even if they had the actual product at hand.
If the port entry logs were searched, the kingdom of the foreign ship with the key individual would probably be revealed, but finding that him was next to impossible.
Even if he was found, getting in touch with him would again take time. On top of that, the physician said that it seems the sailor himself had inherited it from someone else.

Everything was against us, was exactly what it meant.

"It's a most fascinating item, but…we have too little information to go by. As a commodity and an item with unknown properties, it would take a vast amount of money and time, and that will not do," Georg said with a sigh.

Master Julius smiled wryly.

"And there you have it, turned down for such a feeling."

“It is not that I do not trust your judgment, but I believe it is not an item we should go after now. Handling it while we are in the middle of expanding poses too much risk.”

That was the biggest problem. With practically no clue, even if they found something, something that may not even be added to their goods had a huge risk of expending a lot of money.

Even if my head understood, I could not give up.
Something was making a ruckus in my chest. If we’re speaking of the game memory, no words came to mind, but I had a feeling choices were being laid in front of me right now.
Whether I searched or gave up, the future will change. I had a feeling I was standing on a turning point.

“May I hold it…?”

“Go ahead.”

Permission granted, I reached for the cartridge on top of the table. Even looking at it from up close, none of us had the slightest idea by what means it was made.
I tried smelling it while it was in my hand, but it was faint. Compared to traditional Chinese medicine, it was an almost odorless object. And, just barely, it had the fragrance of the earth or plants. That was all I got.

I’ve had a lot of opportunities to come into contact with medicinal herbs, so I had some hope I’d recognize something, but I was wrong. I was completely in the dark.
I was weary of my own low specs. I’m learning many things, but even if I planned to become good at them, in my case ultimately lead to the shortcomings of a jack of all trades, master of none.
Unconsciously, I almost sighed.

“……?”

Noticing something in the corner of my eye, I turned to look, and found Michael staring at the medicine with keen interest.

“Would you like to see?” I asked spontaneously, and he nodded.

After I handed over the medicine, I shifted my gaze from Michael to Georg.

“Master Julius. Georg.”

“Yes?”

“What is it?”

Looking at the two, for a moment, I was filled with indecision.
If, I began to say, and stopped. I wasn’t asking a favor from a friend. It was business. There was no point in assuming.
I blinked once. Taking a deep breath, I began again.

“Will you sell this medicine to me?”

“……”

Georg’s eyes opened wide, and Master Julius’s expression changed.

“In the palace there are wizards and apothecaries. They have more knowledge than I do, and if they take a look at the original I think they could examine it and offer advice. Of course, I will also look into the harbor’s logs.”

“You mean to say you will investigate it?”

“Yes.”

If I tried and discovered a clue, then I could try to come back and negotiate with these two. But, a business deal with so many uncertain factors can’t be called a deal.
It boiled down to simple selfishness.

“May I ask for your reasons?” asked Georg.

His clear amethyst eyes looked hard at me.

“Our kingdom will continue to have diplomatic relations with many other kingdoms. Our harbors especially will be receiving the ships of faraway kingdoms. It will be too late once people begin to suffer from the same illness similar to what the sailor experienced. In addition, depending on the circumstances, it’s not unlikely for others to become infected.”

Going by Georg’s story, it was winter when that sailor came down with illness. The route of infection was unknown, but in case there was an infection vector,

because it was dormant in the insects and animals which became intercessors, they probably won't spread it to other people. I simply can't abandon the possibility of luck being on our side either.

"There is an illness that cannot be cured with the medicines in our kingdom, and there is a possibility it can be cured depending on my efforts. My reason is quite simply that."

"Miss Marie…"

"Please don't misunderstand. I am not condemning either of you. I won't say something foolish like you should throw everything away to saves lives if you had the power and money. A charitable enterprise and business is different. There are different things you should protect in each, so there is no need to feel ashamed."

My knowledge and skills cannot prevent a pandemic.
It was difficult enough with the use of modern medicine, so a little girl like me had almost no chance doing anything in a world without proper equipment.
But it was different for Princess Rosemarie. Even without knowledge of medical science, she had *power*.

"However, I am the princess. In order to protect the people and their livelihoods, I want to do everything I possibly can."

"……"

The silence dragged.
Georg sighed deeply, and looked at Master Julius next to him.

"Understood," Master Julius said. He nodded, for some reason smiling with lively eyes. "There are three of the medicine's reserves. Please take one of them."

"Ah…!"

"I have to beg forgiveness regarding the other two. We too will begin to investigate, so we have absolute need for them."

"Huh…?"

Thank you, I opened my mouth to say and froze.

I was simply astounded by this rapid development.

What did he just say?

"May I request for you to look into the port entry logs? It would probably be faster to have you investigate it than for us to put in a petition and wait for it to be processed. If the kingdom and boat is identified, we will take over."

"Uh…"

"In any case, the doctor has no wizard acquaintances, so may I also bother you to ask the palace wizards their opinion? If possible, one with an earth attribute would be best, but I wonder if there is anyone in this day and age?"

"Eh, umm. There are no earth attribute wizards."

"Well then, let us see if I can unearth any in this district. Even with low magical power, someone with plant knowledge is preferable to a wizard with a different attribute."

The conversation progressed rapidly while I was still in a state of confusion. I'm not sure how it came about but these two men of the Eicher House were joining in my investigation, but why? When I didn't even ask them to? Have I been sleeping with my eyes open?? …no, no, that's stupid.

"If there is any progress, we will report it in detail…"

"Um, excuse me!!" I interrupted Master Julius.

"Yes?"

"You two…are helping me?" I asked, hesitantly.

"Yes."

The question I approached while preparing to be thoroughly mortified if I'd misunderstood was immediately affirmed.

"For what reason…?" I asked in a lost voice.

I'm supposed to be saying *There are things I must establish, could you accept that?* so even if I accepted this turn of events tell myself I should be pleased, my confusion did not disappear.

I must look rather pathetic, because Master Julius smiled with an expression

that made it difficult to tell whether he was troubled or having fun.
But I didn't feel malice. Those eyes were kind through and through.

"The reason is very simple. You are our…nay, the Viscountcy of Eicher's benefactor."

"Benefactor?"

I flinched.

"If you had not come to our home, my sister-in-law would still be in her sickbed."

I was nothing so outrageous. I'm sure I couldn't do anything by myself.

"That wasn't…through my own power. Rather, my power and the like is a very small thing. With the help of everyone, the fruit was auntie's own effort."

That was what I believed.
Master Julius shook his head. The next moment, his eyes became distant as if he were looking back on the past.

"No. If you had not been here…if Your Royal Highness had not been here, nothing could have been done."

My eyes opened wide to be addressed with that title again.

"My elder brother loves my sister-in-law so deeply he could not bear to be strict with her. Even when I said it was not good for the body to shut oneself away, he spurned my advice, saying the outside was too cold. Even when I brought nutritional foods or medicine, if my sister-in-law refused them there was no choice but resign oneself from forcing her to take them."

Well, they were not very easy on the palate, so it is no wonder she hated them, said Master Julius with a wry smile.
I agreed as I listened.

Other than the recipe, the routines of hygiene I came up with wasn't that unusual. Had it not occurred to me, it would not have been able to be put to use.

The head of the family was in no position to refuse, and his partner, Lady Emma who was fond of children, had been willing to try. She called me the most talented sort of person.

“Despite my belief that someone could change the way things were, I gave up believing before long. Therefore, when you stated you would improve my sister-in-law’s physical condition, it was the first time I was thankful to God for the miracle that had occurred.”

“Calling it a miracle is really too much of an exaggeration…”

“It is not an exaggeration. You were even smaller than my nephew, but to have the wisdom to take care of others is indeed a miracle. Moreover, you not only made the suggestions but offered assistance. Making use of your spare time to come and go between our home and the palace, sharing in our troubles and our joys. Are you aware of how rare a trait that is?” Master Julius said energetically.

The tone of his voice was unusually bouncy, as if it had been elevated, and his cheeks were a little flushed. His eyes sparkled brightly like a young boy’s. Overawed, I leaned back a little before I realized how rude it was, and cleared my throat.

Georg, who had been keeping quiet as he listened, smiled wryly at his uncle and spoke.

“It was because you brought my mother back to good health that my father and my uncle were able to devote themselves to their work, and in the same way, I could study so much. Fearful of the possibility of parting with my mother any day, we came to standstill. There is no mistake that the one who showed us the future and allowed us move forward was you.”

It was a gentle smile.
The distortion and madness within the game was nowhere to be found. It was soft and warm, a tender smile that made me want to smile in return, and I could finally feel it.
That the future changed. One tragedy was averted.

“Your Royal Highness, Princess Rosemarie. To you who brought it upon yourself to save our beloved family, we would like to once again express our gratitude and respect.”

“This time, please allow us to be the ones of service to you.”

Both of them bowed to me with deep reverence.

The Reincarnated Princess's Inquiry. (6)

The Reincarnated Princess's Inquiry. (6)

After much deliberating and worrying, I decided to depend on their generosity. I had reservations. However, more than my little conflicts, the most important matter was definitely the method of procuring the medicine.
This is not the place to waver, I snapped some sense into myself.

I requested their cooperation and left Master Julius's residence behind.
Inside the returning carriage, I was eager to try my persuasive skills on Michael this time for sure. But, the essential person himself was barely with me. Although he responded when addressed, his mind was absent. He was looking down in silence, and it was easy to tell that his thoughts were occupied.

His hand was gently brushing the black cat sitting on his lap, but in an absentminded manner. Sometimes he ruffled up the cat's fur, and each time it would swing its tail like it was pouting.
It looks like the black cat had its leg bitten by another animal and couldn't walk on it, so it was crouching in the middle of the road when Michael saved it. For now, we've administered first-aid and decided to take it home. Even though it was probably a stray, it was surprisingly docile.
Even when Michael's hand made a slip and touched the cat's tail, it didn't bite. All it did was stop at raising its voice in complaint, *Nyaaa.*

"Michael?"

His head snapped up.

"Y-yes…?"

"The cat is telling you it doesn't like you not paying attention to where you brush it," I said to him gently.

Glancing between me and the cat, he looked shamefaced as he said, "Eh? Ah, I'm sorry…"

Gently brushing the cat, he apologized to it as well, "Sorry to you, too." The

black cat closed its eyes partway and purred, as if it was telling Michael it forgave him.

Seeing him look so depressed, I couldn't help saying, "Is there something troubling you? If you'd like, I can offer an ear."

"Princess…"

I only had a short amount of time to speak with him until we reached the Great Temple. There was no time for other talk.
If I didn't persuade Michael here, he'll probably leave to travel the kingdom. And then, somewhere along the way, he'll stop by the temple and lose his life, and probably have his body hijacked by the Dark Lord.

I knew that, but I couldn't think of his Michael's worry as of little consequence. I can't just dismiss it, saying it was *trivial* compared to the revival of the Dark Lord. I mean, I knew nothing about him. In the game, almost nothing was spoken of his life before it was over.

Silence fell. Only the sound of the wheels on the stone paving was audible. His trembling lips hesitated, then were chewed on. Instead of rushing Michael, I watched attentively and he after a brief spell he finally started talking.

"……Your…Highness……Princess, how are you…so strong?"

I stared.
How am I so strong…? Was I ever strong in the first place?

It was questionable as a compliment for girls, but not disagreeable per se. The question stuck in my mind, however, because I've never felt myself to be strong.

"Am I really, I wonder?" I questioned, and Michael nodded fervently. He looked the very image of a young child.

I was overwhelmed by a rush of desire to protect him, the way you do when holding an infant in your arms.

"May I ask why you think that way?"

He nodded, eyes going shifty again.

"…earlier Your Highness said that even if a person had power or money, it did

not make it their responsibility to help others. Because everyone has their own interests to protect, so there was no need to feel shame."

"That's right," I said, throwing in appropriately agreeable words to keep the conversation going.

"You force nothing on others. You never said, *You have money, so you should give to the especially poor,* or *You're strong, so you must protect the weak.* And yet, you believe it is only natural for yourself to carry out the duties of your role as a princess," said Michael in an eloquent torrent of speech. A few hours ago he had difficulty communicating, but his speech was so fluid now it made me wonder if it had been an act.
I guess if he wasn't self-conscious, then he could speak with normalcy. I wonder if he was less nervous now because his mind was filled with other worries.

He had a habit of looking down, but he lifted his eyes and looked at me with painful desperation.

"It does not mean you enjoy having been born as a princess, so how can you come to terms with it so readily? Do you ever want to run away, abandon your duties, or has it never crossed your mind?"

Michael kept talking in a rapid manner without pause, as if he did not expect an answer.

"Ah, of course it has."

"Why…don't you……huh?"

But maybe my words registered, because he stopped.
His dumbfounded expression was, I'm sorry, so amusing I could not help laughing as I answered again.

"There *have* been times I wanted to abandon everything. It's only natural."

"Um, n…natural, you say?"

"Yes."

His one-folded eyes blinked incessantly.
It seems like my answer was quite unexpected to Michael. His honest eyes could not conceal anything and conveyed his bewilderment. My smile became even

deeper.

"I'm a flawed human. Even if I understand how blessed I am, there are days I also feel how restricted my life is now. I want to toss away my studies and lessons, and read a book all day in sunny place. I want to fling off my confining dresses, and run around barefoot through the grassy plains in a cotton dress, you know?"

"The Princess wants to…" said Michael in a daze.

"The reason why I only *think* and don't put into effect is not because I make a splendid princess. For the future I desire, it's essential I not run and face what comes head on."

In itself, there *was* compensation in acting freely.
The tempting near future, or the stability of the distant future? Which one will be chosen is dependent upon *that* person. Like ants and crickets, the moral lessons we've been taught would have us believe that those who lived in steadiness had the right way of it; but surely there was no true correct answer.

"If there's something that makes you want to run away, you *are* permitted to imagine. In that moment before you run, which one will you choose? That which you stand to gain or lose?"

I looked Michael straight in the eye, telling him, *The one I choose is* you.

In the end, I couldn't persuade him at all, ahhhh.
But he was so worried, I couldn't bring myself order him around, telling him his thoughts were useless.

"I think you did well," said Sir Leonhard as he watched me reflect.

It was a short distance from the Great Temple to the palace. Only the two of us were inside the carriage.

"He may seem timid, but I venture to say very stubborn. Even if you tried to stop him with a legitimate reason, he wasn't likely to bow down, was he?"

I nodded to show my agreement.
In the game, he left the Great Temple to help people because he had the leverage to. Even if he seemed like the type to give up easily, at heart he was a

strong person.

“Furthermore, the troubles he carries are not necessarily completely unrelated. I detect no falsehood in his determination to help others, but he hesitates. Until he comes to a decision and puts his foot down on what he wants to do, he is unlikely to go rushing out.”

“If that’s so, then it should be fine,” I answered vaguely, unable to calm my emotions.

“It will be all right,” he said quietly.

“!”

I automatically looked up and met his calm eyes. He smiled kindly, like he was trying wipe away my worries.

“Men are far vainer and simpler than you think. Though the lovely, younger girl has a strong determination and purpose, as long as her path remains unclear and her steps hobbling and ungainly, they will not follow her lead.”

“Sir Leonhard…”

“It’s alright. You’re not wrong.”

He repeated his litany, and strength poured out from his upright body.
My trepidation seemed to be leaking out to Sir Leonhard. *Hoo,* I blew out a sigh, and he smiled again as he watched.

This person was truly skilled at handling me.
It’s not like I don’t feel like he has me eating out of the palm of his hands, but even then I find I don’t care.

When he said it would be okay, I finally felt like I wasn’t alone.
I’ve never gotten advice from someone else before, so even when I was uneasy, there was nothing else to do but advance. Even when I said *It’s OK, you’re not wrong,* I was only speaking to myself.
Though the words were the same, coming from another person…that’s not right. Sir Leonhard only had to say it, and I’ve already gained so much peace of mind.

“Thank you,” I said, relishing this feeling of happiness that seems to have lighted up like a lamp in my heart.

Very gently, he accepted.

The Reincarnated Princess's Literature Review.

The Reincarnated Princess's Literature Review.

[A release at long last, yay. Finally finished, and I must admit, I've forgotten how satisfying it is. A big shout out to everyone who has left a kind message of support ever since the last release. It's been, uh, four? long months, and you guys are all awesome. I read all of your comments even though I may not always remember to respond, and I appreciate every one of you. Welcome to all the new readers as well, it was really encouraging to see that this series still gets discovered from time to time despite the lack of recent releases. Long live Rose!]

"Faster than I expected," the king said with characteristic lack of expression.

Just as night fell, I showed my face inside the king's chambers. I was prepared to get yelled at to not be a hindrance, but my expectations were betrayed when he spoke to me with disinterest instead.

"Is that so?" I muttered, feeling drained.

I was expecting him to make fun of me for being late, so I wasn't sure how to respond. In fact, he probably was making fun of me but I had no desire of getting into a fight.

"Then I have kept you waiting."

"Waiting, I was not."

I paused. *"Is that so?"*

This time the words dripped from my mouth.
I was *this* close to snapping. I wanted to go back. I wanted to turn around and walk out, *BAD.*

With no concern for the dead look in my eyes, father picked up a candlestick and began to walk at a brisk pace.
Inside the spacious room with its florid patterns drawn in intricate details with gold on white in the Renaissance style, there was an ill-matched, plain door.
He pulled an antique key from a breast pocket, and inserted it, glancing at me once. He did not speak, but I had a feeling his eyes were telling me to hurry up.

Pushing away my desire to walk back out, I followed behind.
The light dimly lit the room, which was devoid any ornaments, a sharp contrast to the opulence outside. The size was a quarter of the previous chamber, and because the walls were lined with bookshelves, it felt all the more small. There were no windows, but the air wasn't stagnant.
With the exception of the shelves, the only furniture were a table and a couch
Without hesitation, father took a book from the shelf and held it out to me like he was forcing it on me.
Not seeing the bewildered look on my face, he placed the candlestick on the low table and stretched himself out on the adjoining couch.
Pulling a decanter of wine toward close, he poured himself a glass with sloppy movements and drained the cup as if it were water. After doing so, father extracted a bookmark stuck between a thick book and started reading.

He was really making himself at home.
Who was this person? My father? No, absolutely not. *It's probably his double,* I thought.

I stood expressionlessly, confused.

This man before me, Randolf von Wervard, was my real father, but he was a private person and I had nothing to do with him.
So even though his private life was a mystery to me, I had assumed he probably worked even on holidays.
I mean, what would my father be like if he wasn't working? Besides the basic activities like sleeping, eating and the like, I couldn't imagine him as a regular person. In fact, *did* he sleep? That was all I could think.

"……"

He really made himself at home.

His body sank into the high quality leather couch as he immersed himself in his reading while sipping on a second cup of wine. By no standard anywhere would it be considered good manners the way he sprawled out.
Illuminated by candlelight, his features were softened and my father actually looked like an ordinary human.

"Not reading?" he asked.

"I will," I automatically responded.

"Then sit. Until when do you intend to stand?"

"……"

Er, *where?*
Book under my arm, I silently turned and looked at the interior of the room. As I previously mentioned, there was only the table and the chair. That was the end to my hopes for a second chair.
Even if he ordered me to sit, there was nowhere for me to do so.
Don't tell me he meant for me to sit on the floor? I stared intently at the dark carpet laid on the floor.

"Come."

I raised my head to look at my beckoning father. *Sit here,* he indicated, patting the couch he himself was sprawled on.

"Uh."

I mean, sure, it was a big couch and there was enough space for someone like me to sit on it as well.
I understood, but my mind was screaming *NO.* What sort of punishment was this, that I'd have to read while sitting so close to my father?

"I can't let you take it out. If you want to read, do it here."

I should have brought a chair with me, I thought. In the end, I swallowed my dissatisfaction and all I said was, "Yes, father."
It would be unpardonably rude to have an underling shove him out of the way.
Excuse me, I said, sitting on the less crowded space next to his abdomen.
If I've come this far, then I can be serious about it. As for father, let's think of

him as a slightly novel back of a chair.

I set the book on my knees.
As you'd expect from an antique, the color of the pages have changed and the letters on the cover have worn out and disappeared.
I took a deep breath to calm my heartbeat racing from holding an antique in my hands. I gave the darkened indigo blue cover a stroke and opened it.

"……"

Turning to the inside of the cover, a page was enough to leave me troubled.

You're kidding me. NO. This was going to be a problem? Is this really happening? I thought, dumbfounded.
Actually, to be honest, this should have been the first thing I worried about. I was an idiot for not thinking of it. Why didn't I solve this problem before visiting my father?
Even if I lamented my lack of foresight, there was nothing I could do now.

I might come up with a solution when I swing by next, but did I even really have a second chance?

I gripped my shaking finger.
Ahh, I'm such an idiot. An idiot, a really big one.

No way, don't tell me…

"……"

Don't tell me I can't read it!

I felt sick. The book on top of my knees was written long ago in the past. Naturally, the characters would differ from modern writing. I couldn't read it at all.

Why hadn't I realized something so obvious?

“Can’t read?”

A little squeak popped out of me and I jumped at the sudden voice.
I slowly turned to look at my father lying face down on the couch, and found he had stopped reading and was watching me.
Cold sweat dripped down my back.

“I……”

My voice failed from nerves.
What now? What should I do? Do I tell the truth, or make a bluff? I didn’t know which was the better choice. Depending on the answer, however, it was possible I may lose my chance to read these books.
My head spun blankly. Even if I had a tendency make counter plans, I knew nothing about father.

The answer I came up with was:

“I can’t…read…but I will!”

Before I realized it, I had given him that idiotic response.

I wanted to kick myself. What the hell?
“Can’t read but will”? What was that, if there’s a will, there’s a way? Or sheer effort?

“I see.”

Hold up, no retort?
Don’t tell me he ignored my slip up? I was baffled. No matter how hard I stared, father showed no expression. Not smiling, not angry. Maybe disgust, but I certainly couldn’t tell from his face.
Raising half of his body, father peered at the book over my shoulder.

“Can you read modern history books?”

“Yes.”

If we’re speaking of the library’s history books, then I could read most of them. I’ve been studying since I was five years old, and I believe that alone is an accomplishment.

“Then there should be sections you can read. Look at this part.”

Father reached a hand over and traced a sentence in the book.

"It reads as 'the Kingdom of Nebel'."

I–I couldn't see it.
It honestly looked like patterns instead of words.

"The complicated characters have merely been simplified over time. Naturally, there will be a lot of obsolete geographical names and expressions."

After he explained that, I thought I could maybe see what he meant…?
When I tried replacing the complex patterns imitating things like ivy or feathers with dots and curves, I did feel like it was similar to our modern language.

The language of my nation, the Kingdom of Nebel, was similar to the alphabet and was comprised of 26 characters.
In other words, if I count the number of patterns, simplified and applied them to the modern alphabet, would that work?

"Father, may I borrow some paper?"

Now that I had a lead, I was suddenly pumped with energy, and I zealously turned around to look at my father.
He told me to use whatever I wanted, so I took paper and pen from the adjoining room and began to vigorously scratch.
At my back, father had returned to reading, but I was no longer concerned with him.

"……?"

All right, all copied.
Nodding with satisfaction, I reviewed my work. Did I leave something out? I counted and stopped, head tilted in confusion.
No matter how many times I counted, there were 30. Four too many?

"Don't you have four too many?" asked father with exquisite timing, as if he could hear my inner monologue.

"?!"

I was too surprised to speak. *This man has seriously been trying to shave a few years off my life for some time now,* I thought, putting a hand to my beating

heart.

“Forget the rest. Just know that the four are always together.”

“Err…I see.”

He could have been nicer about it, but it was still sound advice.
When I referred back to the book, true enough, the four always came in a set.

I excluded them and compared the modern alphabet to the other twenty six characters, discovering in the process just how different the four were from the rest.
The other characters were modeled after nature and living things, but that set of four were the only ones I couldn’t even begin to imagine the origins for. And yet, they filled me with unease when I looked at them.

What did they stand for?

“They represent the Dark Lord.”

It was my father opening his mouth to talk again, as if he had read my mind.

“Above all, it was forbidden to mention the Dark Lord by name, so they were careful only to use known characters to refer to him. The set of four characters were created for the express purpose of indicating the Dark Lord and prohibited from other use. I don’t know how to read them. A pronunciation does not exist, or it has even been said to be the name of a person from the time, but it is not certain.”

I jumped on the words, “Do you mean to say the Dark Lord was human?!”

“Didn’t I say it wasn’t certain?” he responded coldly.

Meaning more one theory has been passed down to the end?

“Enough, get to reading. As soon as you’re done, I’m going to sleep.”

Father yawned. I felt like I was seeing something extremely rare first the first time.
Before he kicked me out, I should read what parts I could. Following my father’s example, I decided to concentrate on the book and began to read as well.

The Reincarnated Princess's Literature Review. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess's Literature Review. (2)

"……"

I've been scowling at the book a little under two hours now, vertical lines carved into my brows, and a pounding headache from overworking my brain and eyes.
I stretched and rolled my head around to loosen the stiffness in my shoulders.

I was massaging the furrows between my brows when the back of my chair– which happened to be my father, spoke.

"Could you understand it?"

He was so quiet, I had forgotten he was there. Man, my ability to react was awesome.

"In truth, only a little."

"Tell me." He said it without so much as a glance at me, his face turned away.

I thought about it as I replied, "The peace we know of, we owe in no small part to the sacrifices of our forebears."

"I don't care for your opinion."

I paused. *"Is that so."*

He was quick to cut me short when I had put so much thought into my words. I seethed, but did not argue. I had to admit, even to myself I sounded like a school girl writing an opinion essay.

"I understand there is a possibility the Dark Lord's powers were dependent on his hosts."
According to the book, our forebears decided that destroying the Dark Lord was an impossible task, so they searched for a way to seal him off instead. But even the method they sacrificed so much to create was imperfect and the Dark Lord revived many times.

Over the course of countless fierce battles I believe they were eventually able to fabricate a stronger seal, but until that happened it must have been living hell. It took him a mere five years to come back to life, or so the story goes.

It seemed, however, with every instance the Dark Lord revived he was never imbued with the same strength of power.

“In the nightmare era where half the continent turned to scorched earth, his host was a renowned wizard. Tracing the humans who became his hosts from the previous generation to the ones before even that, I was lead to wonder if perhaps the Dark Lord amplified their magical strength.”

“That’s right.”

Father closed the book in his hands and turned to look at me.

“Magic was necessary to oppose the Dark Lord, but taking anyone with strong magical abilities near him was a risk–a dangerous gamble.”

I looked down solemnly, silent.
All those people turned into hosts must have had so many regrets, having their bodies used to drive their loved ones and their kingdoms to ground.
They held powers capable of opposing the Dark Lord, but because of that they were turned on the world.

Huh?

There was something I wasn’t seeing.
What was it? It was important. I had a strong feeling I was forgetting something.

I was deeply lost in thought when my father said, “Well, then,” and I suddenly felt attacked by suffocation.

“Uguhh?!” I shrieked.

“As I said earlier, I’m off to bed.”

“E-even so, please don’t grab me by the back of my neck!”

With the candlestick in one hand and the scruff of my neck in the other, my father left the room.
The moment we were outside, I was dropped.

This–this *asshole.*
I questioned the way he grabbed his young daughter by the neck like a kitten even though she begged him not to. At least show some hesitation!

I glared at him reproachfully, but he was unconcerned.
After locking the library, father turned for his chambers and waved a hand at me like he was shooing a cat or a dog away.
I was pissed, but snapping here would prove extremely immature.

“Thank you for sparing time for me. Please excuse me.”

I bowed my head and left.
But don’t think it ends here.
Just wait, Father. I’ll definitely get back at you, with interest.

The sight of my guard knight greeted me upon my exit.
I was guilty of keeping him waiting long, but not an inch of slack was shown in his posture. He stood alert and commanding, his form and the austere light in his green eyes as he kept unceasing vigilance reminded me that yes, come to think of it, he was actually a man of influence.

But in the next second, his firm expression dissolved and his eyes crinkled gently as he happily addressed me with lips curved, fierce features softened.
It was easy to see his joy.

“Princess Rosemarie!”

Why was he such a faithful dog?

I flinched away from his enthusiasm.
For a moment I worried how I should respond, but I walked on brusquely, no change in expression.

“I have returned.”

“Yes!”

He only said one word, but it made me question what he was so happy about.

I could almost see his imaginary tail wagging vigorously. My grandmother had a dog named Taro, and his reactions whenever I took him on the chore of a walk reminded me of Klaus now.
The difference between the two was that I couldn't see Klaus as cute. Anything but that.
Hey, who was it that said 'tsundere'?

As I walked back to my own rooms with my flower boy of a dog–who happened to be my guard knight–I thought back to the Dark Lord's description.
I didn't want to put off as many of my worries as I could until the next day. I wanted to unravel the puzzle by the end of the day.

"Princess Rosemarie."

The biggest piece of information I've gained was the fact that the Dark Lord amplified the magical strength of his hosts.
It wasn't definite, but the possibility was quite large.

"Princess Rosemarie, are you not cold?"

"I'm fine."

No known figure existed for how much the Dark Lord amplified, but if that number was a hundredfold, for example, a host with a power of one then became a hundred, and a hundred became ten thousand.
When it came to the people who were turned into hosts, there must have been a great difference depending on whether they were a fighter or a wizard.

"Once we have returned, would you like me to prepare you a cup of warm tea?"

"No, thank you. I'm just heading straight to bed."

If that was true, letting any wizard near the Dark Lord was probably be a risk. If they had strong magic strength, then to a strong degree, the moment they turned into hosts their potential for damage increased.

"Catching a cold will be tough on you. Please do not strain yourself, I implore you to instruct me."

Among the Dark Ones, there were some types with tough shells and other

types with coats of fur, and many situations where swordsmen and archer units were ineffective. So if you took the Dark Lord's loyal subjects and his own defensive powers into consideration, a wizard was indispensable in a subjugation party.

"It is my pleasure to be of use to you, Princess Rosemarie. Please, let me know if you desire anything."

"……"

I gave up. I couldn't ignore him.
I was trying to think, but the constant yapping in my ears were too damn annoying. Are you a stupid dog? Is that what you are?!

"Klaus."

"Yes, m'lady!"

"I'm trying to think. I want to you be quiet." I looked over my shoulder and gave him a cold glare.

He was silent for a long time before he said, "Yes, m'lady," and hung his head downheartedly.

H-huh?

For some reason, I lost my composure when I saw him so dejected.
My being cold to Klaus was nothing new. In fact, I don't remember being nice to him *at all*.

I paused.

To think of it now, I'm quite heartless, aren't I?
No, well, I did have something of a reason. Klaus triggered unnecessary flags on his own, and he's a pervert. Even though he'll eventually become the Priestess's guard, I don't think he should be so fixated on me. And he's a pervert. It was hard to keep him on a leash because he's quite the belligerent pervert. He's a pervert, you see. A pervert.

Right. Keeping him from getting any closer than necessary also served as self-defense.
Contrary to the fresh flower boy looks he gave off, Klaus came with some serious

handling instructions on the labels.

But let's face the music and admit the truth.
The reason I adopted a cool attitude with Klaus was because I *am,* in a sense, taking advantage of him. No matter what I did, he smiled; and that was a distorted form of trust.

"Klaus," I said after some hesitation.

He carefully peeped a look at me.
He really was a dog. The very image of an abandoned one. I could almost imagine him sniffing at the ground pitifully, asking, *Don't you need me?*

He was probably lonely. Lately I've been sticking close to Sir Leonhard because I ask for his company. And even though Klaus may be my personal guard, I was relying exclusively on someone else.
Of course, there was a justifiable reason for that and I had no intention of apologizing.

But this time, I was at fault.
He only worried for me, and I treated his kindness with disdain.

"I'm sorry, Klaus. Could I have that cup of tea after all?"

He made a sound of surprise.

"I'd like *you* to make it, not the maids."

Eyes rounded, Klaus choked down a breath before he managed to say in the likeness of a server, "My pleasure!"
His earlier despondency seemed a lie when he smiled with his entire face.

I smiled wryly to myself, quietly releasing breath of relief.
I was glad to see him cheered up.

"I will make an absolutely delicious pot of tea for Your Highness," he declared with fresh determination.

"Yes," I answered with a smile pasted on my face after a few hard seconds had passed. *"I look forward to it."*

I hope he missed how I unintentionally stumbled over my words, and the sudden dread in my eyes. I couldn't help it, because the punishment I just

inflicted on myself will begin soon.

I only leaked it once before, but Klaus was devastatingly disastrous at all work of the domestic type.
There were many reasons for this. For example, he had clumsy fingers. His personality was not the type to heed fine details. Most importantly, he lacked common sense.

Please don't say common sense and the like aren't necessary in housework, it's *pivotal.*
When you're cooking and think there isn't enough of a certain flavor, you adjust it by adding seasonings. Klaus killed the taste of his ingredients by adding no more than a few drops of his secret ingredients. Of course, I meant that in the bad way.

Once he made me tea and I wanted to spit it out. As a princess I had to resist the urge, but my body had instantly rejected the flavor. I wasn't wrong to question whether I had been served poison from its unpleasantness.
Tea tasting bitter or astringent, I could understand. I guess that happens when you use too many tea leaves in addition to over brewing.
But why was it gooey? Why was it bittersweet??

I wondered if he had added jam like they did with Russian tea, but he denied it. He said he hadn't particularly added anything else. Quite the contrary, I remembered with fear.
Then why is the tea thick, you! I silently snapped. *Are you some sort of alchemist, able to create something from nothing?*

Suddenly, something niggled at the back of my mind, and I inadvertently stopped moving.

"Princess Rosemarie?" Klaus said in a mystified voice.

I ignored him to focus on my thoughts.

To create something from nothing went against reason. It was impossible.

It's not like I was trying to be critical, but I felt like I had just discovered the answer to worries I had dragged along with me from the king's own chambers.

Right. That was it. It went against reason.

If you multiplied one with ten thousand it became ten thousand, but anything you multiplied with zero was zero. No matter how great the Dark Lord's powers were, someone who had none would not be augmented.

For example, even if the Dark Lord amplified ten billion times over, if his host had no magic strength then it meant nothing.

"Ahhhh."

A sound of dismay fell from my lips.

My derived answer was very simple. Therefore, it was cruel.

In the game, Michael von Diebold became the Dark Lord's host.

He possessed magic.

The Reincarnated Princess's Deliberation.

The Reincarnated Princess's Deliberation.

"My apologies for the wait."

I stared at the tea cup in front of me for a long time, frozen.
I slowly released my held breath and managed to squeeze some words out.

"Thank you."

The porcelain white cup adorned with a golden rim was filled seventy percent of the way with an amber liquid. The color was normal. From what I could see so far, there were no hidden dangers.
I took a deep breath and reached for the cup. My hand trembled slightly, and the moment I grabbed the handle the cup clinked audibly.

I brought it close to my nose and smelled it just to make sure.
I never had the luxury of elegantly enjoying the fragrance from the start. This was me trying to gain information from my senses. I was behaving this way to sniff out danger. It was also like a ritual to prepare myself for the worst.

"……"

I breathed it in and gasped.
Wide eyed, I stared at the black tea (in name only).

It smelled…like black tea…!!

Nothing could have prepared me for such a mundane turn of events.
Tickling my nose was not an offensive smell but a rather vibrant and fruity aroma. Judging from the notes of muscatel, he was probably using high quality second flush tea leaves.

Perhaps he used the same ingredients the last time as well, but that time it had no smell at all, far from muscatel. *Completely* odorless. I couldn't even tell if the tea leaves used were Darjeeling or not.
Actually, if you recognized that lethal substance with its odorless yet killer flavor

as high quality second flush tea, I think it would be considered a blasphemy against all black tea.

“Say, Klaus?”

He stood a small distance away from me.

“What is it?”

“You made this, right?” I asked him, unsure.

Was it possible he recognized his own fatal household skills and had asked the maids for help?
But he nodded affirmatively, bright expression clouding over with worry.

“Yes. Is something amiss?”

I thought it cunning of him to only show humility at times like these.
It was more than scary enough that there wasn’t a problem, but to put it bluntly, it was hard to talk about it for some reason.

“No. It smells wonderful.”

It really did, which had the opposite effect of making it terrifying.
As soon as I threw him the compliment, his eyes lit up cheerfully. Klaus smiled with his entire face, an attractive line of red drawn across his cheeks as he blushed.

“I must confess, I have been practicing in secret in order to serve you a delicious cup of your favorite tea.”

“R-really now?”

I wondered what the heck his goals were. I inadvertently looked away.

Stop it, don’t do that! This is where you’re supposed to be moved.

I had to stop myself from completely recoiling while I pondered the reasons why my guard knight would feel the need learn how to brew tea. It was probably the moment I was supposed to be touched his dedication would take him so far to do something like that for my sake, but even imagining the suffering of the head maid who likely took him under her wings did not bring tears to my eyes.
How cold.

“……”

Or, rather? If that *did* happen, then this cup of tea…
Could it miraculously be the real deal?

Hope blossomed in my chest as I stared at the gently swaying surface of the liquid.

I might be able to do this.
I took a gulp and prepared myself, holding my breath for a few seconds before taking a sip of the amber-colored drink.

“……!!!!”

My eyes bulged open as wide as those in comics.
Spreading through my mouth was an extreme bitterness and astringency, followed by a taste bud stinging acidity. A moment later, a thick sweetness came around and washed everything away.

My consciousness slipped into the deep end as the paradise of flavors rushed in with a force strong enough to kill my palate.

NOT A DAMN THING HAS CHAAAAANGED!!!
Who was it? The *fool* who hopefully said I might be able to survive this? It was *me!*

The color and smell were both on point while the flavor was exceptionally devastating. An unexpected trap—it created a false sense of safety which lulled you into relaxing while cutting you down from behind. This thing deserved a level of treatment on par with a tasteless and odorless poison.

I strengthened the fingers that were shaking so much they might drop tea cup, and lifted it up at an angle.

“……!!”

My survival instincts told me to spit it out, but I endured and swallowed the entire thing with watery eyes.
If I put it down I won’t have the confidence to pick it up again.
Gasping for air, I placed the empty cup back into its saucer.

“Than…k you…for the…tea.”

Downing an entire cup goes against prescribed princess etiquette, but I can't say I cared. I felt very accomplished.
My stomach was heavily protesting the dead weight, but it should go away eventually. It's bound to…maybe, surely. The stomach isn't supposed to have any problems digesting *tea.*

Completely exhausted, I looked at him over a shoulder, all life drained from my face.

"There's just one thing I want to know, Klaus. Did you put something in my tea?"

He shook his head, a little perplexed.

"No. Nothing particularly."

"I see."

I sighed. So it really was a miracle compound created from his devastating lack of sense?

"Um," he said, looking as if something had struck his mind.

I hesitated to ask. "What?"

What was it? Did he put in something poisonous after all?

"I placed my allegiance and respect for Your Highness in the tea," Klaus whispered with a sappy smile on his face.
A vein popped up on my forehead. Who could blame me for spectacularly losing my temper?

"Very well," I said with unprecedented frost in my voice.

It seems like the lethal substance's true identity has been revealed. Perhaps the truth of it was that he actually *hated* me?

I was giving him a look of absolutely zero warmth, but for some reason Klaus was staring happily back.
I faltered in the face of his warm expression, which differed from his self-satisfied look from earlier.

"Why are you smiling?"

“It seems you have returned to your normal self, Princess Rosemarie.”

You frowned the entire time, said Klaus as he pointed to my eyebrows.
I stared at him with rounded eyes.

Certainly, before I entered my father’s room I was coiled up with tension, and then I was preoccupied with thoughts of the Dark Lord after my departure.
The way I stared at my feet with furrows in my brows, did Klaus worry for me in his own way?

“I made you worry.”

“No. I could not help myself.”

If he saw my bitter regret, he would tell me to pay him no mind.

Frankly, it was extremely difficult for me to accept that looking at him with absolutely no warmth and being curt with him was my norm, but let’s ignore that for now.
My reaction was exactly what he had been expecting, given our usual banter, so it didn’t bother him at all.

“Couldn’t help it, huh?” I muttered, repeating his words to myself.

He looked at me strangely. “Princess Rosemarie?”

“Say, Klaus. May I tell you something?”

“By all means.”

“This is just an example, but suppose someone was gravely injured. For various reasons, they decide not to show their wounds to anyone and hide the fact. Do you think it would be wrong to forcibly disclose their secret?”

It was almost settled that Michael who became the Dark Lord’s host inside the game possessed powers. Judging from the Dark Lord’s powers, that strength was no small amount.
However, Michael has been trying to get away from it all this time. He *has* been successful.
Would be right for me to divulge that fact?

“I wonder? If left unattended, the wound will probably fester and become rotten, so I cannot really recommend it.”

“Yes, but if they could treat it on their own, they might be able to live normally even if a scar remains.”

I asked Theo before, and he said he wouldn’t take off the limiter even though his control was much better now because his magic was easily influenced by rage.
He studied so hard but even he was not without his flaws. Where was my proof that Michael won’t run wild?

On the other hand, if Michael has survived these ten odd years until now without anyone knowing better, then he may already have control.

“Completely erasing all evidence of the wound would be impossible, but if properly treated and medicine is taken, it shouldn’t get worse. But if you expose what they’re hiding, the pain you inflict on their heart won’t be a small matter. Even if you think you’re in the right, when you look at it from their point of view, they may feel like their hand was forced.”

There will be a lot for Michael to study if he becomes an apprentice, and one day it might even personally help him.
As a fellow comrade with the similar powers like Lutz and Theo, I think the limiter may even help relieve the burden on his soul.

Yet, wizards are faced with many hardships in this world.
They’re exposed to inquisitive eyes, and have many instances when negative emotions of hate, fear and the like are directed at them. Everyone who has stood beside with them have likely had a drastic change in attitude.
Their movements are limited, and they’re targeted by scum.

Should I leave him be, or expose him?
What was the right thing to do as a princess? And also, what did *I* want to do?

“I’m sorry, I said something strange.”

One way or another, I needed to make a decision by myself. Not being able to hold it in because the burden was too overwhelming was not good reason to involve Klaus.
Nevermind, I said, smiling self-deprecatingly.

Klaus cut me off when I tried to end the discussion, however.

“I can never possess keen insight like you do.”

“Huh?”

“Therefore, I do not know what is right and what is wrong. However, to look at my lady’s lovely appearance, one cannot imagine her being as active as she is.”

It was troubling that I couldn’t tell whether he spoke praisingly or whether he spoke ill of me.
A doubtful look crossed my face, and for a moment I was quiet. Then, with a sigh, my tight expression eased.

“It certainly isn’t like me to stand around piddling.”

“Even if the doing brings regret, will you not regret it more should you do nothing?”

It was a great pressure forcefully bearing down on me.
If you don’t do it and regret it, then you might as well do it. Wasn’t that rather sloppy advice?

Ah, but maybe then I can lose these knots in my shoulders.

“Thank you,” I said quietly.

My bothersome and a handful-to-deal-with guard knight smiled at me like an older brother.

The Reincarnated Princess's Bashfulness.

The Reincarnated Princess's Bashfulness

"Princess Rosemarie, it is almost time."

"What, already?"

Klaus's voice pulled my nose out of the book I was reading, and I blanched when I checked the clock.

Shoot, there were only ten minutes left until the meeting.

I inserted a bookmark and closed the book, getting up from my seat in rush. After lightly straightening my attire, I left the room.
My pulse was racing, but a princess of the realm does not dash through the halls, so I speed walked with a care for elegance. What the heck does elegant speed walking even mean, a voice mocked.

I had asked Lady Irene for some of her time today, and I'm to meet with her to discuss the fever countering medicine. Georg asked to be present as well whenever the conversation took place, and, for some reason, it seemed like Michael was tagging along as well.

My intent had been to arrive early so that I could greet them in the room, but I was cutting it close on time. I thought I had some leeway to relax, but am I not allowed to do that either?

There was a lot of time to kill before the appointed time, and against my better judgment I opened a book gifted to me by Master Julius from a foreign country. Was that the reason for my downfall?
If you're a bookworm, then I think you'd be able to relate. I love books, and when I read I often forget the time. I slowly tear myself away, prolonging the inevitable as long as possible, telling myself, Just a *few* more pages, just *one* more page. Two to three hours disappearing in this fashion was common.

If you already know what will happen, then don't read! I have no comeback for this.

I mean, I was dying to find out more. The book was of foreign origin; possibly a cookbook.
I'll just take a peek, I lied to myself, and cracked it open, only to find the words incomprehensible. I started by looking at the pictures, but then got curious despite myself, and couldn't help taking a closer look. It seemed to have originated from an island nation under the rule of the Kingdom of Schnee. The language was a little different from Schnee's official language, but I was positive it originated from the latter, for the basic structure was similar.
Maybe it's a dialect, I thought, and the time I spent staring unblinkingly at a dictionary passed by in a flash.

I've inherited a bit of the geek from my previous life. Once I become interested in something I have a habit of becoming invested. It gets to a point where I seem to block out the sound from my surroundings, and I remember how often it shocked my friends and family.
I don't consider it a bad habit, though if it got to a point where it hindered me from making it to appointments on time, then I should probably work on it a little.

I flew down the stairs in a quick pace. I was rushing, so I couldn't help it if my steps were hurried, but I was careful to make as little noise as possible, and…

Hmm??

I strained my ears as the chiming of bells reached me.
The sound was clear and rhythmic. I stepped off the stairs and turned in the corridor, looking down at my clothes.
Today's outfit and accessories shouldn't have bells on them.

My light pink dress was scattered with small flowers, ribbons at the front, and lace on the cuffs, but not a single metallic piece of ornament. Even my lace choker was adorned with a single small rose.
My low-heeled pumps were also very simple simple in design.

I looked down at my feet, and my eyes widened at the speedily approaching small shadow.
Bells chimed with every adorable footstep, and I looked on in stunned surprise as it passed by me and went as far as a meter before before looking over its

shoulder.
The black cat with its glossy coat looked at me with its gem-like blue eyes, head tilted ever so slightly. A silver bell jingled lightly where it hung on the red ribbon tied around its neck.

"Nero!"

The black cat meowed cutely back at me.
My baby is so smart! … Pull yourself together!

I crouched and picked him up.
Nero made no resistance and settled easily into my arms as I scolded him, No!

"What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you not to run around?"

I looked at him sternly, but he showed no sign of being intimidated. He looked up at me with big eyes and nothing else but puzzlement.
Damn it, he's cute! My baby is so cute! So cute the whole world is jealous!

He purred contentedly when I brushed him under the chin in circles with the back of a finger.
I decided to name this cutie Nero. He's the cat Michael saved from my carriage the other day when I nearly ran it over.
Michael can't keep pets at the Great Temple where he stays, so I took Nero in instead, and now I'm hopelessly in love.
Like a grandfather enamored with his first grandchild, I'm a hopeless owner who wants to spoil him with everything, but I still can't allow him to freely wander through the castle.

"You were hurt just the other day."

Brush aside the fur and at the base of his right hind leg you'll find a scar.
He was almost run over by the carriage because he couldn't move, and it must have been a very deep bite, because even traces remain even now.
However, in a strange turn of events, the same day I adopted Nero, the wound had almost completely closed, and in the span of a week with me, he could walk around indoors. The wound was severe enough he might never have been able to walk again, so even now I don't understand how it was possible.
Well, even if the reason wasn't clear, I was glad to have him better.
I was just afraid his wound would open up again if given the chance, so I made

him stay inside my room.

I walked while talking to myself. “I don’t have time to go back to my room. I wonder if there’s someone who can take you back for me?”

Nero protested in a louder voice. I wondered what he was saying.
Stretching in my arms, he reached for my cheek with a limb. His paw made firm contact. *Sooo* cute.

I brought my face close to his, and, unable to escape, Nero meowed again.

“Don’t you meow at me.”

I’m all better but you keep locking me inside. Let me out once in a while, he probably said.

It won’t be a formal session, and they’re all friends, so even if I take Nero along they probably won’t get upset, I thought. Besides, he was a very smart boy.

“You won’t cause trouble?”

“Meew.”

“OK, it’s a promise.”

Let’s ask everyone, then, I whispered with a little laugh.

“Princess Rosemarie,” said Klaus in a placating tone from behind.

I answered without bothering to turn around. “What is it?”
I could tell he wasn’t butting in to tell me not to talk with a cat. It was a daily occurrence in my room, so as my only guard knight I hoped he was already used to it.
Making conversation with your beloved cat, and sometimes baby talking them, is the fate of a cat owner.
Obviously, I won’t do it carelessly in public, but this area close to the greenhouse has restricted access, so it shouldn’t be very populated.

“Princess Rosemarie.”

“I *said,* what is…it?”

A little irritated he kept saying only my name, I looked over my shoulder and froze in place.

He wasn't the only one standing there behind me.

Wide blue eyes stared at me.
Lutz stood rooted in surprise, mouth gaped open.
Theo rested both arms against the wall, head hung down low. I couldn't see his expression from my location. An awkward silence ran through the area.

——*SNOOOOOORK.*

Half a step behind them, Klaus's expression was saying, *"I was trying to tell you."*
Too late now, Klaus. You should have warned me earlier!!

"Hey *you,* what was that?" Lutz asked gravely.

I wanted to die on the spot.
Even if he asked, the only answer I had was, What indeed. I speak to my cat, but I don't exactly have a reason for it. Must I spell it out? All cat lovers have this ability!

"What are you doing? What do you want to do? I mean, what do you want to do with me!" Lutz grumbled in a flat tone. For some reason, he became more and more heated, until he exploded at the very end.

"Um, I have no reason to want to do anything?"

"Ahhhh! What is this I'm feeling! This dark desire burning inside!"

Watching the visibly irritated Lutz, a terrible thought occurred to me, and I paled.

"Um, murderous intent?"

"No!" he growled. He denied it instantly, scratching at his chest. "I don't really … get it, but anyway, can I ruffle it until it's all messy?"

"Huh? No!"

From a crouched level, Lutz glared in my direction, hands moving excitedly. I held Nero protectively and scooted back a step.
It didn't matter how much Nero had healed up, I didn't want to hand him over the Lutz. Something scary was happening.

“Cats are delicate. You’ll scare him if you do that.”

“Don’t worry, that’s not what I’m talking about.”

I paused. “What do you mean?”

When I moved further away, Lutz inched closer.
Klaus observed the situation with cold eyes, hand rested on his sword’s handle. I want help, but don’t pull out your sword!

“Lutz.”

A big hand landed on Lutz’s shoulder.
Theo was the one who intercepted his suspiciously acting partner. He was supposedly so overwhelmed he had to face the wall earlier, so when did he recover?
He slowly shook his head when Lutz met his eyes.

“That’s not it, Lutz. Just because it’s not a cat doesn’t mean you can be rough.”

“Yeah?”

He spoke admonishingly, but whatever he spoke of was rather ambiguous. My head tilted to the side as I listened to the conversation veer off tangent. The two ignored me as they nodded at each other.

“Girls are even more delicate than cats, and it’s easy to hurt them. Being rough with them is out of the question.”

“You’re right. The truth is, I have an overpowering desire to tackle it to the floor and shower it with affection.”

Lutz chewed his lip thoroughly, and Theo looked on kindly.
The conversation was so far beyond me, I’ve already come back to my senses.

I was keeping Georg and the others waiting, so was it okay for me to leave now?

Deciding it would be best to take my exit, I slowly and quietly took a step away so that I wouldn’t make a sound.
Both of them looked in my direction at that exact moment, as if a signal had passed between them. Theo smiled at me sweetly with his whole face when he

saw me frozen in place, breaking into a cold sweat.

“That is to say, don’t you think one should be gentle, princess?”

“Regarding?” I could not help interjecting.

Just like Lutz, Theo’s hands were moving excitedly.

“This is troublesome. Let’s turn them both to rust on my blade.”

A single guard knight stood behind the two, similarly smiling with his entire face as his sword drew free.
The throbbing vein popping up on my forehead must be my imagination.

URGENT, THE HELP OF A SENSIBLE PERSON WANTED.

The Reincarnated Princess's Meeting.

The Reincarnated Princess's Meeting.

My wish must have been heard, because the hard click of footsteps became audible, and a beautiful, slender woman appeared.

She wore a chic blue dress under a blue robe, high heels on her feet, and her black hair was elegantly arranged.
In one slim arm she carried heavy books.
She turned to scrutinize us, one by one, eyes narrowed through her monocle.
Her red lips curved into a smile.

"Oh, my. Something very amusing is happening, I see."

It was the Head Wizard, Lady Irene von Artmann. At her entry, Lutz and Theo visibly panicked, and a tiny groan escaped their lips.
Lady Irene turned her sweet smile on them.

"You must have excess energy to be causing disputes in the corridors. If that is so, then I should have created a body building regiment with no breaks. Shall we rectify that promptly upon our return? Well, my *fool* apprentices?"

"Please forgive us!" the two apologized immediately.
They stood and bowed with a practiced agility that even those who were athletically inclined might envy. You guys, *what* was your occupation again? In spite of myself, I watched with a sense of detachment.

The meeting hadn't even begun yet, but I already felt exhausted.

"You too, Klaus. Put away your weapon," I ordered, looking at him. He reluctantly sheathed the sword, an unhappy look on his face.
To draw a sword inside the castle when it wasn't even an emergency was *clearly* an issue.

"Good grief! No matter how the times change, men will remain children. How troublesome. Do you not think so?"

After a single cold glance at the group of guys, Lady Irene smiled gently at me.

The difference in warmth was impressive.
I'd break the boys' hearts if I agreed with her, so I hesitated and dodged the question with a noncommittal smile.

"Oh?"

Lady Irene looked down, her eyes growing wide when she saw the black cat in my arms.
The human-friendly Nero displayed no signs of being frightened despite being stared at, and looked up at Lady Irene with head slightly tilted. When he meowed at her, Lady Irene broke into a grin.

"What a dear! Princess, are you raising him?"

"Yes. His name is Nero."

She reached out with the arm not holding the books and tickled him under the chin with the back of a finger. He didn't hate it, and allowed the affection.
It suddenly occurred to me that she probably liked cats, because she was even more gentle than usual. If I was going to ask, wasn't now the time to do it?
It felt a little awkward taking advantage of Nero's cuteness, though.

"Er, Lady Irene. I apologize for bringing personal baggage with me, but might I have permission to take him inside with me?" I asked timidly.

She nodded readily.

"I would not mind. We are to share a table with acquaintances of yours only, and this one seems very docile and of the well-behaved sort. I trust he will not make trouble.

"Quite the difference from my *fool* apprentices," Lady Irene added with a bit of poison to her words as she gave Lutz and Theo a sidelong glance. The two of them kept their gazes fixed to the floor, their mouths shut.

"I expect neither of you have a complaint?"

There was no longer a question mark at the end of that sentence. Even though it was disguised as an inquiry, wasn't it closer to an command?

The two straightened their backs, their voices overlapping as they spoke in unison, their answer united. "None at all."

Their attitudes as they desperately tried to not incur her wrath was a refreshing change.
I could understand why Lutz, with his slight build, might refuse to take any part in the bodybuilding regiment. But strapping Theo, too? Interesting.

For now, however, let's give precedence to the guests who are waiting.
The unexpected situation continued, making us late, but we herded ourselves to the room.

The room was 46 square meters, paintings hung on three of the walls, and the ceiling was decorated with fine ivy details. Beneath the hanging splendor of the chandelier, Georg and Michael stood from their seats.
I apologized for being late and they waved it aside with a smile. Georg looked at me curiously when he saw the cat, and I explained Nero's story.
Next to him, Michael said in a small voice, *"The one from before."*

"Yes. He's the one you saved."

Michael watched as Nero stretched in my arms and looked up at him with great interest.

"He looks well, I'm glad."

Michael's voice and the look in his eyes were very gentle.

I smiled. "His injury has been quick to heal, and the truth is that he can already walk."

I said it to ease his mind, but, for some reason, Michael's face became stiff. He held his breath, looking as if he had swallowed something odd by accident.
The hand he had stretched out to touch Nero stopped midair and withdrew.

"Michael?"

His strange behavior made me concerned, so I peered up at him, but he averted his face.
He kept his head down, and I felt confused.

Did I do something wrong?

"Princess, shall we begin?" asked Lady Irene.

"Oh, uh, yes."

I took my seat.

Since they were meeting for the first time, the boys went around making self-introductions. Even through that part, Michael never once looked in my direction.
I'm a little…no, I'm in a *lot* of shock.

I fought against the urge to look down, and addressed the main point. "Well then. Lady Irene, if you would be so kind, I would like to hear your thoughts regarding the medicine I handed over to you."

You have things you need to do first before you can even be sad, I sternly told myself.

Lady Irene spread the cartridge that had been placed on top of the mahogany table. The pill had been broken and powdered.

"When I tried to take a closer look at the refined material, I noticed it had a slight tinge of red. From the feel of the material, I believe it is bark."

Georg stared at the medicine fixedly, repeating her words back. "Bark, you say?"

"It is much too coarse to have originated from leaves or roots. You could make it into a paste by adding a binding agent to the clump of spices. The smell is weak, and the taste quite bitter."

Lady Irene opened a thick book she had brought.

"Bark-based medicine are not very common. What I am checking in our own kingdom is…"

She turned the book in our direction.
On the page she pointed to with her pale finger, there were various illustrations of trees with comments written on them. A tree which bloomed tiny yellow blossoms, a tree bearing big shiny leaves, and then, a tree with yellow bark on the inside. Lady Irene politely explained their uses one by one.

"However, each characteristic is different. Even if we comb through the trees and shrubs one by one, what we have in our hands is a pill that has already been processed, so any comparison would be difficult. The current situation therefore

leads me to say identification will prove a challenge. ”

Done with her general explanation, her eyebrows lowered and she gave a small sigh.
Once again, the smallest of clues raised our hopes, and unsurprisingly brought us low again. The room fell into pondering silence.
Theo raised his hand.

“Can’t we trace it with magic? Wizards borrow nature’s strength, so they should be proficient at finding the powers of their same attribute.”

“True. For example, if they are a water attribute wizard, they can locate the source of a river. If they are a wind attribute, they can sense the flow of currents in the atmosphere or read the weather. And if they are an earth attribute wizard, then they may be able to find the original environment or its species. However, as you and I both know, there is no earth attribute wizard in the palace.”

In the rural areas, it seems like there do exist wizards who make a living doing the work similar to a doctor. However, since they are not under the patronage of the kingdom, their strength can easily be guessed.
According to Lady Irene, their powers included having skilled hands when it came to raising plants, but they were just as normal as other people. They can harvest a day or two faster, for example, or make plants withstand withering. Stuff to that degree.
But even if they tried to do it, there was a big possibility it could end in failure.

“Aren’t there any other choices apart from painstakingly following every clue?” asked Georg.

It was overwhelming, but at this point, there was no other method.
I’ve finished looking into the port entry logs, and know the ship originated from the Kingdom of Flamme. I traced it from the port town facing the western sea as far as the destination it had sailed for. The rest I’m leaving to Master Julius. New information might just come rolling in from there. We can’t give up. Let’s hope for the best.

For now, we dissolved the meeting, and everyone stood from their seats.

I was thanking Lady Irene for her time and making friendly conversation, when someone spoke to me from behind.

“Umm, Miss Marie?”

“Yes?”

I turned to find Georg standing behind me with a nervous look on his face.
The discussion is over, what is there to be nervous about? I wondered. When my head tilted to the side, his expression became even more stiff.
What’s wrong with you, Georg?
A seizure? Chronic spasms? If that’s the case, should I call the grandfatherly court physician for you?

“What is it?”

Looking away from me, Georg mumbled hesitantly. “Uhh, umm…”
His appearance as he looked down, rosy-cheeked, was sweet like a young maiden’s. I thought his looks had become dignified, but he still had traces of his mother’s looks.
His femininity is so high—!

“If–if you don’t mind, would you kindly guide me to the greenhouse?”

“To the greenhouse?” I repeated.
I wasn’t mocking him. It was just a little surprising that Georg would show an interest in plants, but he impatiently opened his mouth and started to justify himself.

“Err, well, that is, I have nothing to be ashamed of! I’ve heard mention of the abundant number of rare medicinal plants cultivated here, and merely wanted to see them at least once!”

“Oh…kay?”

Somewhat overwhelmed, I took a step back.
Georg noticed me pulling back and cleared his throat, apologizing in a small voice. He shook his head in order to let me know not to mind him, blushing in embarrassment.

I was surprised by his force, but I assented.
To Georg, who was helping Master Julius, anything valuable was…didn’t it come down to a natural response regarding procurable items that can become goods?

The greenhouse has a strict no entry policy when it comes to outsiders without authorized access, but it should be okay since it was Georg. When I looked to Lady Irene for her opinion, she nodded magnanimously.
Permission granted, I turned to Georg.

"Very well. If you are fine with me—"

"Wait a minute!"

I was going to nod and smile, but before I could even do that, a pale hand blocked my view. The next moment, a body pushed itself between me and Georg. The hem of the black robe made from a fine fabric lightly flapped like an afterthought.
All I could see was the back of his head because his back was turned to me. But even though I couldn't see his face, I knew who he was from the peculiar color of his nearly-white silver hair.

"Lutz?"

"If he needs a guide, *we'll* do it."

"Huh?"

How did this come about?
Why would the fiercely shy of strangers Lutz suddenly take it upon himself to offer to guide someone he had barely met? I didn't understand.
And why the need to even wedge himself between us?
It was perplexing, and one question rapidly followed another. Theo came to stand next to me. He peered into my face, a gentle smile on his face.

"Princess," he said, "don't you have to return the cat to your chamber?"

He looked at Nero in my arms.
Nero must have been weary; he was sound asleep before I realized it. It certainly wouldn't be very kind to drag him with me here and there.

"You're right. Then, can I bother you two?"

"Yes."

Lutz looked back at me with a smile. He nodded. "Of course. Leave it to us."
I had a feeling Georg said something as well, but Lutz and Theo were blocking

me, so I couldn't see him. The two of them are in their growing stage, and the difference in our heights only continued to widen. They formed a barrier between us.
Suddenly, a face popped out of Lutz's shadow, and I looked at Georg.

"Well then, Georg, do you find this arrangement agreeable?"

Georg's brows were knit together, and, after a long hesitation, he nodded. "Yes."

I switched my focus to Michael who was still sitting down.

"Michael, will you be going with him?"

He looked up with a start.

"Y-yes? What, what was that?"

It seems like he hadn't heard a thing.

"Georg will have Lutz and Theo guide him to the greenhouse, but what about you?" I explained patiently.

"I," he said hesitantly, chewing on his lip.
His wandering gaze, which seemed so indecisive, settled on Lady Irene, who was collecting the books she had set on top of the desk.

She noticed him and asked, "Something the matter?"

Michael spoke desperately, stumbling over his words. "Er, excuse me, Your Excellency… If you would be so kind as to, um, spare…a moment?"

I stared at him in shock. I hadn't expected him to say that, but all Lady Irene did was blink mildly. Behind the monocle, her jet black eyes gleamed with intelligence as she considered Michael.
His shoulders shook as she stared at him, but even though he was trembling, he did not look at away.

"Very well."

She looked down and sighed.
"Come," she said to him as she gathered the books in her arm and began to walk away. Belatedly returning to his senses, he followed Lady Irene as she left the

room.

I mulled over it as I saw him off.
Did Michael want to consult her about his own powers? But if that really was the case, why did he have a sudden change of heart?
Until this moment, I thought he would continue to hide it.

“What is the matter with Michael?” asked Georg, confused.

I didn’t know how to answer to him.

The Reincarnated Princess's Dialogue.

The Reincarnated Princess's Dialogue.

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*[Shameless plug: If you haven't read/seen **Konyaki-haki sarete Me ga Samemashita** (translated by yours truly), make sure you take a look at it! It's a sweet, straightforward romance. A short story you can finish in one sitting.]*

I was staring at the words on the faded paper rather than reading them. I sighed.

Whatever Michael discussed with Lady Irene that day was unknown to me.
I was curious whether or not he spoke to her on the topic his powers, but I couldn't straight out ask. I'd be in trouble if he turned the situation around and asked how I knew, and I didn't think I had the confidence to pass it off. Besides, ever since the meeting, I haven't run into him anywhere, so I didn't even have the chance to ask.

Any details about the Michael before his body was taken over by the Dark Lord was miniscule, even in the game.
That was why I had absolutely no idea what he thought, or how he'll try to act.

"……"

Another sigh slipped out.
I was furious at myself for being so useless.

It was comparable to me using a strategy guide up until now, and knowing beforehand where the traps awaited me made it easy to avoid them as I lived my life. But this was where it diverged.
Destroying flags and continuously avoiding a chaotic future has yielded a situation quite different from the game's.
Knowledge pertaining only to the game was useless.

But even if I've lost my metaphorical compass, I must learn how to keep moving.

"Hey."

"Ahhh—!!"

I jumped when a voice suddenly spoke to me. At the same time, a hand reached out from behind and grabbed the book lying open in my lap.
I twisted around with the intent of taking it back, only to freeze.

"If you have no intention of reading, *don't* bother."

Light blue eyes pinned me down, scrutinizing me with displeasure. The tone of voice without a slice of warmth was cutting.
Shivering as sweat dripped down my back, I silently whispered to myself, You screwed up.

The man sat up from the largish couch. Still irritated, he closed the book with a rough move. I wanted to tell him not to handle such a historically valuable book with so poorly, but it wasn't something I could say when I was spacing out with that valuable book not a moment ago.

I got off the end of the couch I had been sitting on and stood on the floor.
I took a deep breath, and tightened my stomach. I controlled my expression, straightened my posture, and bowed my head.

"I am sorry, father."

Father looked at me, and the frown between his brows deepened.

"For what?" he asked sharply.

Though his young daughter made a laudable effort to apologize, the air around him did not soften in the slightest. I was disgusted with myself for spacing out even knowing he was that sort of person.

This was my fourth time visiting my father's chambers. There were no friendly exchanges, but the time spent only in silent book reading was peaceful, and perhaps a little listless. It was an excuse for an act of folly that served me no good.

"……"

At a loss for words to respond, I chewed on my lip.
Father looked at me coldly, chin propped in a hand, the elbow resting on a raised knee.

“What do you apologize for? Let’s hear it,” he asked once more.

“For…”

My voice shook from nervousness.
I scolded myself for almost looking down in shame, and tucked in my chin.

“Not having the desire to read, even though I had the book open.”

I answered honestly, like a fool.
I had a feeling I did the same thing the first time I came here. When he asked me if I couldn’t read, and I gave him my idiotic reply that I would even if I couldn’t.
I haven’t made any progress.
But what else could I do? If one had neither the head nor the guts to use trickery, all that was left was defiance.

“Though presented with an opportunity to peruse through a precious, valuable book, I was preoccupied and halfhearted.”

With another muttered apology, I bowed my head again.
Father sighed with an annoyed look.

“If you honestly think apologizing will grant you pardon, you are gravely mistaken.”

His words were harsh, but he expression appeared somewhat mollified.
The book he kept out of my reach he now handed over like he was forcing it on me. I was amazed he gave it back so easily, but I returned to my senses and tightly hugged the book close with both hands.

Father grabbed the wine bottle on the table and poured all that remained into his glass. I watched him gulp it down like he didn’t even taste it, and he pointedly ordered me to sit.
There was enough space for one person at the end, so I sat on the side. I brought a hand to my fast beating heart and softly exhaled.

I tried to open the book, this time resolved to concentrate so that I wouldn’t

get kicked out. However, I noticed the stare pointed at me from the side, and my hand froze.
I wanted to ignore the look, but I didn't have the nerves needed for something like that. Timidly, I looked in that direction.

"What preoccupied you?"

"Er…"

"You had worries? Tell me."

He said the words, but I didn't immediately understand. My eyes popped open, and I stared at my father.
I had a feeling he asked me to share my troubles, but…was I hearing things? It was just my imagination, wasn't it? No way that would ever happen, *right?*

"My troubles, uh…are not, important enough to trouble you for advice, father."

"Who offered advice? I only said I'd hear it."

"Er, yes."

Right!!

Even though I was irritated, I was also relieved.
That arrogance belonged to father, no doubt about it. Great. For a moment there, I thought I'd slipped into parallel universe.

Only, it may be good to have peace of mind, but what should I say?
I couldn't afford to speak of Michael's powers. Wasn't there any safer topic?

After a short while, I said, "I was troubled with my own lack of ability to apply my skills."

"Ability to apply your skills?"

"Yes, father. I am weak at handling the unexpected. I am only accustomed to approaching situations that are predictable to a certain degree with plan in mind, and my ability of adapting to the unforeseen is lacking."

My father neither agreed nor disagreed.
His stare pressured me to continue.

“I am full of shortcomings. I am weak at quick thinking, and I lack decisiveness. When situations beyond what I expect occur, I am just thrown into jumbled mess, and I can’t do a thing. This will not do.”

For example, even if the future begins to progress in a completely different direction from the game, I can’t afford to come to a stop and waver.
Not knowing was not an excuse. Not understanding did not make it justifiable.

My hands, resting on top of the book lying on my knees, clasped painfully. I watched as my nails bit into my skin.

“I wish to become capable of dealing with any of situation.”

After a moment of quiet, father said in a low voice, “I see.”

When my eyes swung around to him, I was struck speechless to find his handsome face closer than I expected it.
He scrutinized me from point-blank range, and sighed solemnly.

“So my daughter is a big fool.”

It took a few seconds before father’s words reached my brain. A throbbing vein popped up on my forehead, and my voice was low as I squeaked, “Excuse me?”

What did he just say?
After being half-forced to voice my worries, what did this *ass* just say?

A look of rage appeared on my face and I glared at him. Father watched and puzzledly inclined his head to the side.
His silk-fine platinum blonde hair swayed sleekly, casting a shadow on his pale skin. Even such a casual move seemed picturesque and that made my blood boil more.
Every little thing is beautiful with you!! I almost swore at him incomprehensibly.

“Father. Just now…what did you…?”

“I said, my daughter is a big fool.”

Father repeated everything slowly, as if he was talking to a young child.
You’re very skilled at getting on someone’s nerves, aren’t you? You shit father.

“She wishes to be capable of dealing with anything, she said?” he spat, not hiding his disgust. “Who in the world does she think she is, this young girl alive a

mere ten years?”

A princess?! I wanted to retort, among other things.
But in reality, I could only chew on my lips, my face flushed red with anger and embarrassment.

I was pissed off. Mad enough to spit nails, but I couldn’t talk back.
Because it was an unshakeable truth that I was a powerless and ignorant brat.

The Reincarnated Princess’s Dialogue. (2)

The Reincarnated Princess’s Dialogue. (2)

“Was there ever a person who could perfectly deal with an unforeseen event? What you suggest is on par with becoming a god.”

He was telling me it was impossible.

“But, Father, you seem to have that ability. So does my brother,” I protested in a small voice.

I was remembering the wizard kidnapping.
I knew about the plot beforehand since it was the background story for a character in the game, but my father and brother were different from me. They shouldn’t have had any sort of prior knowledge.
Nevertheless, even though I was cheating, they discovered the plot down at the same speed I did. The matter was safely handled, and war avoided in the end.

From my point of view, it was even rather miraculous.
I, too, wanted to sense the traps lying in wait for me and have the ability to avoid them.

“That is why you’re foolish.”

I was instantly cut down by his words.

“Urgh.”

I clutched at my chest, and groaned a little.
That cut. That cut really deep.

He sighed with great disgust, stretched out one leg on the couch, and turned his body in my direction.
I unintentionally looked up, and when I did, my eyes met his. Surprisingly, neither his expression nor his voice contained the sharpness of his words.

Listen, he said in preface.

“Change that outlook of yours.”

I froze at the unexpected advice.
I had been prepared to be scolded or criticized for being a failure. What he threw at me instead was actually an instruction given in a mentoring tone of voice. It was impossible not to be bewildered.

“What do you mean?”

“Most things have something called a warning sign. You may not see them, but the important part is whether you can sense them or not.”

A warning sign, I repeated in a small voice. Father nodded.
After looking like he was thinking something over, he pointed a finger at the book I was hugging.

“You leave that book you’re holding so dear on the table for an hour. Suppose, in that period of the time, the book was damaged, what do you believe to be the cause?”

I blinked repeatedly at the sudden parable.
Though I was lost, I looked at the object he spoke of.

There was an empty bottle, a glass half-filled with wine, and a candlestick on the table.
I held my chin with a hand while I thought.

“If the candlestick falls, the book may catch fire and be destroyed. On the other hand, if the glass tips over, the wine may be the cause. Either one may be the culprit,” I answered after deep thought.

He laughed scornfully. “What an uninspired answer.”

Though I was closing my hands into fists in my mind, I responded with a calm voice. *“Is that so?”*
Father dismissed my efforts, and continued with a simple, Fine.

“Suppose the candlestick did fall over and the book was destroyed by flame. In that situation, was there really nothing you could have done?”

“No. I could have extinguished the fire, or taken the very thing itself out of the room.”

“Exactly. It is the same for the wine. Had you emptied the glass or put it away,

you could have very simply avoided it.”

As if he was giving a short demonstration, Father reached for the glass with a hand and drained the remainder.

I vaguely wondered why father would bring up this topic during the conversation, but came to understand why.
The story was simple, but easy to understand. Books are flammable, and they become ruined when soaked. Placing a flame or liquid next to something like that and taking your eyes off it was extremely dangerous. It didn’t require hindsight, it was a predictable situation.

My father and brother were able to avoid a war not because of a miracle, and neither was it due a gift from the gods.

“If you’re in possession information, measures can be prepared in advance. I wonder if I have it right,” I muttered.
I received no response, but I had a feeling the eyes watching me were slightly narrowed in humor.

Even if my answer wasn’t perfect, it couldn’t be completely off the mark, could it?

I tried to look back on Lutz’s kidnapping in a positive light.

Lutz was a wizard in possession of rare powers in a world losing its magic. The probability that he’d be targeted by other kingdoms was high.
And Sckellz, which tried to kidnap him, was an enemy nation governed by a warmongering king.
Both of them certainly needed to be watched out for.

Here, I cocked my head to the side.
In that case, why Lutz was kidnapped in the game?
Both my father and brother were as distinguished as they were in the game. It was unlike that they could have missed the time or the details of how Lutz and Theo came to the palace.

Even though I was watching both the book and the candlestick, why did the book burn?

“Father…”

“What?”

“I tried to pay attention to both objects, yet the book still burned. What did I do wrong there?”

“You might well have bad eyesight.”

You ass, I silently cursed.

“I asked in earnestness.”

“And I, too, answered earnestly,” replied my expressionless father, matter-of-factly.

I exhaled, trying to let go of my surging irritation. In place of the breath, I filled my lungs with the cold air of the room.
With a measure of calm gained, I suddenly thought, What did he mean by *“bad eyesight”?*

I lacked the insight to fully grasp the situation in my own kingdom, let alone in neighboring states.
Of course, no living human could claim to be omniscient, my otherwise godlike father included. Of that I was sure.

If that’s the case, in the place of his eyes, he gains his information through people—the subordinates spread throughout the world to gather information. To sum it up, what he meant by having bad eyesight.

“Does it mean I made a poor choice in people?”

Come to think of it, when I was investigating Lutz’s kidnapping, didn’t I thinking the same thing?
That it was precisely because Sir Leonhard had come into his position as the commander so early that we got a head start?
In the game, the first reason they couldn’t prevent the situation was most likely because of the man holding the commander’s position. Their cause of defeat was because he failed to notice the abnormal change in the knight Niklas von Buelow, who was one of the criminal.

“Barely passable, I’d say?” said father as he placed the now empty glass on the table. “As a reward, I’ll give you a bird.”

“Huh?”

What was this guy talking about?
Unable to keep up with the sudden conversation switch, I gave my father a severe stare. I’m sure my thoughts must have been written across my face. However, he paid me no mind and continued.

“Don’t need it?”

“I do not understand.”

“I thought it would come in handy. If you have any sense of self-preservation, you’ll take it.”

“……”

How very cryptic. Was he even interested in having a conversation?
I swallowed back the sigh spilling out, and cast my eyes down.
You’re speaking to a king, who by nature is a proud man, I reasoned with myself. It won’t do to antagonize him if you don’t fully mean it. He’ll only manipulate the situation to his advantage and cause you more grief.

“I’d leave it well alone if you were more incompetent.”

“Um?”

It was barely perceivable, but his near-monologue remark reached my ears and I couldn’t act as if I hadn’t heard.

“What do you mean?”

My voice shook.

Instead of answering my question, he threw his own question at me.

“Among the surrounding kingdoms, which one do you believe we should because most cautious of?”

I chewed my lip and glowered at him, but far from recoiling, he didn’t even show a fragment of discomfiture. I repeatedly told my own shaken self to calm down and answered, “Laptah.”

There were four kingdoms bordering Nebel: Wind, Schnee, Grund, and Laptah. As an allied nation with friendly relations, the Kingdom of Wind was an exception

to the rest.
In the northwest was the Kingdomf of Schnee. We were united during the war against the Kingdom of Scherz, and foreign relations have been positive ever since. Hypothetically speaking, even if relations became hostile and the alliance dissolved, we were protected by a range of steep mountain, so invasion was made difficult.
While we weren't for sure allied with the Kingdom of Grund, we had strong commercial ties and trade was prospering. Furthermore, Grund was a small kingdom less than half the size of Nebel, so it was very unlikely they would pick a fight.
As my game knowledge has already informed me, I was aware that Laptah was a cunning nation, but even if I didn't already have that information, it was the only kingdom left by process of elimination.

Laptah bordered us to the northeast, and a third of its land was frozen solid. It's no wonder they'd covet Nebel, a kingdom with vast fertile lands.

"What if that Laptah tried to approach Wind?"

"Huh?"

Wind, approached by Laptah?
It was my first time hearing this. My eyes rounded in surprise.

"I…"

I've never heard talk of this, I started to say, but I held my tongue.
The big question was not whether I'd heard of it or not. There were plenty of things my father knew of that I did not.
The important thing was, in the case that it was true, was it a future to be expected?

"I do not think it desirable situation."

Laptah viewed Nebel as an enemy nation. If by any chance, they were to join hands with Wind, we'd be flanked. From the northeast and the west, an invasion on two fronts would hopelessly divide our strength.

"But the Kingdom of Wind is allied to Nebel. I cannot believe they will so simply betray us."

“Alliances are not a permanent. In this world’s long history, there are precedents of alliances with no specified time limit being unilaterally discarded. Well, they stand to lose the confidence of their neighbors, though, so I could say it would be a last resort,” he answered pragmatically.

I gave little groan.
It was vexing, but he was quite right. Even in the war-filled world of my previous life, there were many examples of alliances being broken depending on the tide of the war.
Even if the likelihood was low, we should be wary.

“When I think of that one in a million chance, I have a desire to strengthen our ties with Wind. To do achieve that, the simplest solution would be marriage.”

“……”

My face twitched before settling into a stony expression. Cold sweat ran down my back.

Whose and whose? I couldn’t say bring myself to ask something so stupid. The Kingdom of Wind had two princes, no princess. In other words, Chris and Johan were out of the picture. I was the only who remained.

The words *political marriage* filled my head and left so much impact as to make my vision swim.

So long as you were born into royalty, it was an inevitability you must be prepared for.
Yet I’ve continued to live with eyes averted.

If I accepted…then what about my feelings for Sir Leonhard?

“If you had been born a beauty without brains, I think I would have married you off to some harmless fellow or other. Putting your brainless daughter in another court is equivalent to political suicide. You are foolish, daughter, but you are not without brains.”

His words gave me another big shock.
Was it possible I could have married as I wished, if only I had lived quietly and kept to myself?
Sir Leonhard didn’t fit the bill of a harmless man, but father had placed no

importance on my marriage, so it hadn't been out of the question.

It looks like I've hung the noose around my own neck.

"You seem to object?"

"Yes…"

"Then become something I will be loathe to part with."

His expression shifted as he watched my eyes open wide.
It wasn't a smile, but I could tell he was enjoying himself. His sadistic heart was showing through, like a beast toying with a small animal. I was probably paranoid.

"The Crown Prince of Wind is thirteen years old. In two more years, he'll come of age. Until then, prove your worth to me," he said with great relish.

I cursed him inside my head, You shit father.

The Reincarnated Princess's Temper.

The Reincarnated Princess's Temper.

"Who are you calling a fool!"

I threw the pillow in my hands at the head of the bed as hard as I could.
It did nothing to lessen my temper. When the pillow bounced back, I punched it with all my might.

"'Prove your worth to me'? Get off your high horse!!"

One after another, blows landed on the poor pillow. Feathers scattered through a tear and went unnoticed.
The anger had gone to my head, and I couldn't even use venting as an excuse. What little reason remaining had flown out the window, and I would have run through the castle yelling if it had been viable choice.

Ahhhhhhhh! I'm so mad! Sooo mad! You shit fatherrr!!!

Clutching the pillow, I rolled around on my bed.
If witnessed, my eccentric behavior would have invited the presence of an exorcist rather than a physician, but nobody was watching anyway.
It was possible Klaus heard everything through the door, but yeah, yeah, whatever. I couldn't care less.

I sulked and threw a pity party.

I couldn't remember how I made it back to my room after leaving my father's rooms, the shock was that great.
I continued to space out even after I was left alone, but what finally reared its head was neither sadness nor despair but *rage*.

Face it. I've tried so hard, and I get an undesired marriage? What the hell!
If I said it would've been better to quietly accept my fate, then wouldn't that be a complete denial of all my efforts until now?!

That's the definition of calculating.
To the very end, I was determined to change the future for my own sake, not out

of some pure desire to see everyone live happily.
But. But… I wasn't so self-centered I'd be happy to be the only one blessed. It would be good if a future where everyone–the ones important to me, and the people who surrounded them–can laugh came to be, and I worked in my own way toward that goal.

Who would've imagined that the outcome would be getting tied to a Wedding Route with a faceless prince from a neighboring kingdom?

"Drop dead, you shit father!"

I hit the pillow with all my strength behind the blow.
The moment my fist sank in, several feathers flew out from the seams. The fluttering feathers danced around me like a dream as they descended, and I watched while gasping for breath.

My rough breathing was the only sound inside the quiet room.

"Ahhh… Geez…"

With the moment of rage over, I was exhausted.
I threw myself back on the bed with a flop.
The impact of my body hitting the surface sent a feather into the air again, and it landed on my nose. I blew out a breath and closed my eyes.

"This is pointless."

My low voice bounced back hollowly.
Along with the cooling of my head came a sense of emptiness.

Screaming and throwing a fit alone in your room, then falling into a bout of self-loathing? You're a mess.
What are you doing, Rosemarie?

Staying like this wasn't helping, but didn't want to do anything else today.
Maybe it was an effect of the anger, for I now had a dull ache around my temples.
I doubted sleep was possible, but I intended to get some as soon as the symptom abated.

That's when I felt a tiny touch on my forehead.

“……?”

I slowly opened my heavy eyelids.
I tried to see what that small pressure on my head was but saw nothing.
Reluctantly, I attempted to get up.
Immediately, the dark shadow near my pillow meowed.
The black cat suddenly filled my vision as he peered into my eyes.

“Nero.”

My pet meowed again in response.

He’d been casually relaxing on the sofa during my frenzy, and transferred himself over when I wasn’t paying attention.
Even though I was raving hysterically earlier, Nero showed no fear towards me as he looked down at me.
I had a feeling his marble-like blue eyes were asking, Are you done yet?

“Nero,” I said, sounding very pathetic.

I reached for him, wanting a hug. He dodged, his cry sounding like a veto.

I see. So you hate hugging?

I was saddened, but I could see why he wouldn’t want to be squeezed by the girl who had been raging not too long ago. I decided to give up and watch him instead.
As if he sensed the instant I made my decision, Nero settled down above my head.

For a moment, I was hoping we could sleep cuddled together, but then he started doing something unexpected.

“Huh?? N-Nero?”

His put his paw on my forehead one more time.
Ignoring my bewilderment, he began to make himself at home on top of my head.

You’re kidding, right?
I can’t say you’re full-grown, but I’ll have you know you’re actually quite heavy!

This time my head was literally feeling a great weight.

My cooling head became steaming hot. The vibrations from his purrs were directly transmitted to me.
I'm glad you seem so comfortable, but please don't fall asleep like that.

I must look pretty silly right now, I thought.
What are you doing, Rosemarie…? Seriously.

Looking at the canopy above with half-open eyes, I heaved a big sigh.

Reflecting on my actions again, that was all I could do.
I was supposed to be a character from an otome game, and yet, why couldn't I do anything right? I was a disgrace.

I've never heard of a princess burning with a love that cannot be throw a fit when she hears marriage of convenience talks. I think they usually cry?
I stealthily show up where Sir Leonhard might be and watch him from the shadows of pillars. If discovered, I boldly feigned ignorance.
Thinking of how I swung my pillow around and threw a tantrum, I cringed. Even *I* would cringe. I had a cat curled up on my head, for crying out loud!

I'll never be an otome game heroine.
And that was why I could only struggle in my own bumbling way.

"……"

Both hands folded on top of my stomach, I took a deep breath. Eyes closed, I focused on my thoughts.

My father asked me to prove my worth.
In the two years I had until the crown prince comes of age, I must achieve some sort of result.
What sort, specifically? There was no clear answer. I needed to judge for myself, and moving was the first hurdle.
Our conversation was outrageous enough to make my head swim. Would you really give the young princess such a brutal task? You monster.

But, as luck would have it, I already had two objectives.

The first was the matter of taking preventive measures against the disease spreading in the future.
The settings have changed from the game's, and at present, there was high

potential for an epidemic in Wind rather than Nebel.
If we discovered a cure, we could produce it for Wind in exchange for great leverage.

The other matter was tracking down the stone where the Dark Lord was sealed, and placing it under strict safeguarding.
For Nebel, and the peace of the world, leaving the current situation the way it is, not knowing when the Dark Lord will revive again, was much to dangerous.

Since both had a record-high degree of difficulty to pull off, they should produce huge results.
In the end, it was just talk of the possibilities.
The person evaluating and observing wasn't someone easy to please. If I was unsuccessful, it would be the same as not doing anything. Results are everything, he would probably say with one brow arched.

"Can I do it?" I asked hopelessly.

The questioned went unheard and disappeared into the stillness of the night.

The Reincarnated Princess's Impatience.

The Reincarnated Princess's Impatience.

"…-oyal Highness? Has something occurred?"

"!"

The carriage made a loud sound as it ran something over, like the wheel had hit a rock.
The giant jolt as a result returned me to my senses.

In front of me was Sir Leonhard, his face clouded over in concern. He must have worried about me, spaced out like I was.

"I, I'm fine," I stammered over my words.
As I slowly realized what was going on, my face began to burn up.

I'm terrible person. He was important, yet after I showed him my blank face, I couldn't believe I ignored him the entire time.
Feeling abashed and guilty, I rapidly apologized, but his expression did not clear up. Sir Leonhard stared at me, brows wrinkled and lips pursed.

An awkward silence fell in the carriage.

You wanted to talk with Sir Leonhard so you selfishly begged him to escort you to Master Julius's residence.
What the heck are you doing, Rosemarie?

Feeling ashamed, my eyes continued to drop, until a big hand stretched before them.

Inadvertently, I leaned back.
I wasn't thinking he'd hit me or anything like that. I was just surprised. Acting on reflex.
But without putting it into words, would he understand that? His outstretched hand stopped where it was. When I looked up and met his eyes, Sir Leonhard was wearing a troubled expression.

I did it again!!

I had no idea why Sir Leonhard was reaching for me. but that didn't change the fact that I had rejected him.

You're mistaken, I was just taken by surprise.
I wanted to explain, but couldn't put it into words.

Sir Leonhard watched as I mumbled hesitantly, and he slowly asked, "Princess, can I touch you?"

Touch? What did he mean?
My head moved stiffly as I nodded, stammering grandly all the while.

"Uh, um, ah, yes."

His hand brushed aside my bangs, and his palm gently came into contact with my forehead, as if he was trying not frighten me. At the touch of his strong hand, all my consciousness flew away, and even my thoughts froze.

"……?!"

I held my breath. In comparison, there wasn't even a sign of perturbance in his composure.
Though not for long, I finally had a glimpse of his handsome face, which had been so well hidden under the frown he'd been wearing.
He breathed a sigh of relief and lifted his hand from my face.

"There's no fever."

His eyes softened, losing its severe edge.
Getting the full blast of his gentle smile from point blank range put my brain in near-dangerous levels of discombobulation.

My face burned up even hotter than before.
My brain stopped working, but my heart was going into overdrive.

"Eh, ahh, yes," I replied squeakily. Who answers with 'yes'?

"Please let me know if you're hurting anywhere."

"Yes."

"Or if you don't feel comfortable."

"Yes."

“So, is there anything troubling you?”

“Yes…oh!”

I was trying to contain my hammering heart, counting inside my head and nodding each time without thinking about it. It wasn’t even a loaded question, but I fell for it—hook, line, and sinker—and a guilty look to go with it.
A cautious glance at Sir Leonhard revealed all grins. It was of a different type from the ones previous, and I knew no excuse would save me.

“Bottling everything inside is a bad habit of yours. As your adviser it somewhat displeases me, but there may be something I can do to help if you share your troubles, no?”

Ahh, Sir Leonhard speaking casually is so attractive.

It was either escape from reality, or just me being true to my gut reactions. Despite my inappropriate thoughts, I gave a tiny nod.

But where should I begin?
Briefly, I turned my eyes on him and he slightly tipped his head to the side, as if he was encouraging me. The sight was like an arrow to the heart.

To calm myself, I slightly averted my eyes.

“I spoke to father recently,” I began.

His eyes opened wide. “You met with His Majesty the King?”

“Yes. Perhaps I should mention it was for the fourth time.”

“I can’t tell if you’re throwing caution to the wind, or if you’re displaying decisiveness and the ability to take action in unusual settings,” he said, both shock and admiration in his sigh.
I couldn’t accept his praise with a light heart.
Even though I’m afraid at the beginning, the lessons learned are quickly forgotten once the storm has passed. The type of fool whose mistakes comes back to bite her painfully.

“The first time I was so nervous I thought I’d throw up, but from the second visit onward I found myself somewhat settling in,” I mumbled under my breath. The words sounded like an excuse, and Sir Leonhard’s expression because even

more doubtful.
He tried to look stern but failed and rubbed at his own jaw.

“I’m troubled. I don’t know whether I should be angry at your lack of wariness, or praise you for being so distinguished.”

“You should be angry…”

Or rather, I’ll run away if you praise me. I looked down.
A bitter smile floated on Sir Leonhard’s face as he appraised me. As if he had made a decision after reflecting, he continued without scolding me.

“And then what happened?”

“Actually…”

Head still lowered, I began to recount how I was given an opportunity to read books on the Dark Lord, but they were written in an ancient script so I couldn’t read it very well, and decided I’d need to visit any number of times.
How I got too comfortable with myself and let my mind wander, almost bringing father’s wrath on my head.
How he called me a fool right to my face.
How the flow of conversation changed, with me seemingly consulting father for advice.
And because I took the bait instead of ignoring it, which resulted in a heated exchange between us, I had somehow painted a target on myself.

Speaking of each instance in detail proved quite the form of self-torment.
No one wants to speak of their own failings. My own was beyond repair.
Incidentally, I haven’t made mention of the political marriage yet.

After I finished, another silence fell in the carriage.

It was awkward and I couldn’t stand it, so I summoned up my courage and stole a glance at Sir Leonhard. Brows furrowed and silent, his expression was solemn.
He looked like Auguste Rodin’s sculpture, *The Thinker.*

What should I do? Wasn’t this someone in complete shock?

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